

Ore no Osananajimi wa Joshikousei de Yuusha

**My Childhood Friend is a High School Girl and a Hero of Another
World but It Looks Like There's More To Her Than That**

**- Volume 2 -
The Ivan Kingdom**

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[larvyde]

Chapter 42

Ivan Kingdom Honorary Citizen

“Ivan Kingdom First Heir, Her Highness Rosé Vosne-Romanée Gran Cru Ivan, Is at Cooouuurrrt!!”

A bald old guy in prim getup announced with all his power.

I was a bit taken by surprise and at the same time the people around went down on their knees all together and bowed their heads.

Arina and I confusedly did the same.

We are at the Ivan Castle’s highest ‘Royal Throne Room’

It was tall and wide and had a magnificent air.

The word ‘solemn’ might be appropriate here.

The first thing that catches your eye would be the huge stone statue.

It’s a statue of a sage with a long moustache in a cape, and is about as big as a daibutsu¹.

He’s this country’s founder, Ivan the First.

Underneath him, he watches over two red thrones with gilded edges.

The thrones were put on a raised platform like an altar and there were stairs leading down from there.

Red carpet was laid down on the room that was probably over 50 meters wide, and there were stone arches on either side in an out of reach place. On them there were cloth with coats of arms drawn on them arranged evenly. The pillars supporting those were made of marble and was decorated with three dimensional ornamentations of mythical beasts, and the mosaic picture on the inside enhances the solemnity of the room.

The high ceiling of the atrium-like hall was painted with angel-looking humanoids

with a western touch.

¹ «TN: large Buddha statue»

Inside the room that won't feel strange to be called a temple, were several tens of nobles, officials, and knights in ceremonial garb in a line, and at their head were two rough-looking high schoolers bending down, imitating the people around them.

Yep, they were Arina and Me.

"T, this feels like... a period drama, doesn't it?"

"They do things the same way, I guess. Though they seem to do dogeza over there"

As we were talking in whispers, a woman slowly entered from behind a door at the back of the altar, accompanied by a deep and solemn pipe organ BGM.

Wearing a dress, white, symbolizing purity.

Her face was covered by a veil, and she was holding a swaying, balance-like metalwork. She had makeup on her face and vividly colored lipstick.

Though her individuality is being covered up, she is unmistakably Princess Rosé... the girl who fought with us during the Isky Manor Incident.

"Hieee... L, looking like this, she really looks like a princess doesn't she?"

"Shush!"

I shut Arina up, but I feel the same way.

Taking her time, Princess Rosé sat down on the throne.

The BGM stopped right at that moment.

One of the nobles lined alongside us stood up.

"I congratulate Your Highness for resolving this case yourself. All the retainers present wish to offer you our heartfelt thanks"

"It was all in service to the Fatherland"

Princess Rosé responded from her high station.

Her voice was devoid of emotion or intonation, but it resounded through the whole throne room.

The room might have been constructed that way.

Then Rosé said, “Yuuki, Arina, raise your heads”

“...huh, us?”

“w, w, we can stand, right?”

“She did tell us to...”

“Y, Yuu-kun...”

While we were hesitating, the noble next to us yelled.

“You’re in the presence of Her Highness, hurry it up!”

...with a murderous voice.

“I don’t mind. Stay there”

As Princess Rosé said so, she stood up and went down from the altar.

Immediately, our surroundings started to get noisy for some reason.

“I think we did something bad?”

“M, m, maybe. But I don’t know what...”

Princess Rosé went down the stairs and stood in front of us.

“Sorry, I took you along for some formalities all of a sudden, you must’ve been surprised”

She said to us in that tone.

“Y, Your Highness, to step down from the throne for commoners is...”

One of the nobles protested, but...

“Considering their achievements, it’s obvious, no? Or do you have something to say about my *friends*?”

As Princess said so, he nervously fell silent.

“I’d like to introduce you two to everyone so please stand... you can relax you know”

Even if you say so...

The two of us stood up and looked at each other as if to say “what do we do now?”

Then Princess Rosé prompted us to go toward the stairs.

From a slight distance, we stood in front of the nobles.

Just like some honor students being presented before the morning assembly.

“Shimoyama Yuuki and Sakurai Arina. These two risked their lives protecting me against Marquis Isky’s son Glenn Irish Isky’s treason.

If not for them, I probably wouldn’t be here safe and sound right now.

I shall grant these two the title of Ivan Kingdom Honorary Citizens.

By the name of Rosé Vosne-Romanée Gran Cru Ivan, I grant them all the rights and social services befitting a citizen of this country.

They shall not lack for anything as long as they are within the country

...though normally I would’ve granted them medals and peerages”

Princess Rosé sent the nobles a cold glare.

“But it seems that certain *honored personages* would be inconvenienced by that”

...shouldn’t you just *not* have said that?

or so I thought, but given the time and place, I stayed silent.

Chapter 43

The Five at the Bar

“Ha ha ha ha! The Princess did that!”

“No no no, that’s nothing to laugh at you know... ku ku ku”

When I told the guard knights the story, they rolled in laughter.

“No, seriously, it’s not something to laugh at. Thinking about the mood that time, I didn’t feel like I was alive”

“Yer right”

“Ha ha ha, careful when you go out at night”

Their names were Koji and Kars.

The guard knights we met the first time.

When Arina and I protected Princess to the end in the Isky residence, these two opened up to us.

A whole day after the incident passed.

We rested our bodies in the Isky residence, and the next day a coach came to pick Princess up.

We were then given a room and we stayed there from then on.

We were now in a nearby bar.

It was called a ‘cheap restaurant’ in this world, but basically, it was a ‘bar-room’.

The city was wrapped in an air of enthusiasm since noon, there were hawking voices, haggling voices, the voices of street performers, *hyaho-is*, and the sounds of musical instruments that look like bagpipes and accordions. This bar is no exception, it’s noisy with the sound of people ordering sausages and drink refills.

There was me, Arina, Koji, and Kars sitting around the round table sharing an extra-large portion of pasta and eating. Though it’s called pasta it’s a strange dish that had

small cuts like Soba, and you put it in your personal plate and eat it with salty soup.

There,

“I’ve bought juice refills”

Mist came along.

She’s now changed from wearing maid clothes to some linen commoner clothes.

She decided to leave the Isky residence and come together with us.

.....well, I do have to take some kind of responsibility for her body, so I can’t exactly say no.

“Sorry”

“Nah, it’s alright”

Since this is a bar, you have to go right to the counter if you want to order something other than alcohol.

If you want alcohol, the waitresses always carry some on their trays so they can quickly offer some, but drinks other than that take some time so they don’t really like it.

“You don’t drink booze? What are you, a kid?”

“I *am* a kid”

“But you’re fifteen already, aren’t you?”

“In my country, fifteen still counts as a kid!”

You yourselves, what are you doing drinking since noon!

“Anyway, why wasn’t Mist called to the ceremony, too? After all the things you went through together with us...” I said, to which Mist replied with her own guess.

“I dunno. Maybe if they did they feel like they have to invite all the residence’s maids?”

Though the other maids have slightly different circumstances.

“I’m sure princess didn’t call her because of a grudge”

Suddenly Arina said something like that.

“Huh? Why?”

“Even if Arina is stupid you can’t look down on Arina’s womanly intuition. Fu fu fu”

I don’t get what she’s saying at all.

Is she drunk?

“...but seriously, it was a terrifying thing, huh”

Koji said while pouring his drink.

“Even though Glenn *was* her fiancé, but for him to even cast a spell on her and try to hijack the country is...”

“Yeah, it’s good that it ended up just as an attempt. Not only the Princess herself was put in danger, but even the whole country could also go under”

Kars nodded.

—though it actually *didn’t* end as an attempt.

The fact that the Princess came *this* close to being raped by Glenn was of course a secret of the state.

Not even these two were told the details of how the incident went.

The Princess discovered the bugs, a frenzied Glenn released a monster, and we protected the Princess from it.

That’s roughly what they were told.

If those parasites entered the Princess even once, she wouldn’t be able to wear that dress of chastity.

She’s really having it hard.

“But here’s where it starts, you know. There’s no way Marquis Isky doesn’t get the blame for this”

...The Marquis is probably having it the hardest.

His son became a traitor, he himself is paralysed from the waist down, and Madam Welsh and Tris was killed by his own fake, even the maids left one after the other, saying that the house is cursed.

He was so totally depressed he wouldn’t leave his room.

“Which leaves us with who to defend the Cidre border?”

“The castle officials could take on the job for a while, but...”

“They’re in way over their heads, they can’t hold it for long”

“You can say that again. Also, there’s the fact that the Princess has no fiancé now”

“What happens now that she doesn’t have a fiancé?”

I interjected.

“Actually, His Majesty the King is in a bad physical condition right now”

“He didn’t appear at your ceremony either, didn’t he?”

Ah, now that you mention it.

If they went so far as doing something flashy like that the King would normally be there.

“His Majesty had long been bedridden”

“I don’t mean to jinx it, but in the one in a million chance that it happens, the country might have no King”

“But there’s Princess Rosé so it’s not like you’re going to be out all of a sudden, right?”

As I said that, the knights looked away as if they had something difficult to say.

“.....it’s impossible for the Princess”

Mist then continued from there.

“This country, even us commoners knew that even though we’re not at a direct war with our neighbors, we’re at a confrontation with them. If the King died and we’re only left with the Princess, everyone would feel uneasy”

“Uneasy?”

” ‘Will Cidre come and invade’, ‘Will the Princess be alright if that happens’, ‘If we’re going to lose, wouldn’t we be better off surrendering from the start’...things like that”

“By saying things like that, the morale of the country will affect our fighting strength”

“Not just war. We also risk famine because farmers leave their fields and fishermen run away”

“Before that happens, Princess Rosé needs a strong fiancé”

—— which is how Glenn came into the picture.

If what Tris so proudly said was right, Marquis Isky was a military family.

Professionals that had been on watch against Cidre and protecting the country for a long time.

If you ignore what's inside, they had a name worthy of being the next King.

"But if Princess Rosé's fiancé was decided with that kind of reason, she wouldn't like it"

"As the ones who are always next to her, we know that better than anyone"

"We can only give up and say it can't be helped"

I've learnt things like that when studying history, but when it happens to a girl I know it's...

"It's... a story that makes me sick"

"—— Yuuki, you're a good guy, huh"

Kars suddenly said.

"Worrying about other people sounds like a simple thing, but that distinguishes character. If Glenn had kindness like you, none of this would've happened"

Even if you say that, I can only smile bitterly.

"I'm not planning to, but even so, there's nothing I can do for her right now"

"No, well, I wonder about that"

"From the way things are going, I think there's soon going to be a time we have to borrow your strength"

"....."

I thought for a while, then...

"Hey"

I asked Arina.

".....I don't mean to forget all about it, but the reason we came"

We were rolled up in the Isky incident and lazed around for several days, but the real reason we went on this journey was for the Hero Arina to defeat the Demon Lord.

The real protagonist should be Arina.

“But right now we don’t know where we should go... , um”

“—— If Yuu-kun says so, then Arina is fine with it”

I wanted to stay here until Princess’ troubles calmed down.

That was what I was going to say, but Arina answered before I could.

“Then we should first prepare the things we’ll need for daily life”

Mist stood up.

“Yuu-kun, you don’t know how we buy things here in this country, do you? Come with me”

This is reassuring. I had trouble back in the first village.

“You’re a lifesaver”

I thanked Mist.

“A, A, Arina goes too!”

Arina hurriedly stood up.

“At least to carry the things...”

“Arina-chan should go back and sweep the room”

“Eh, but”

“The room hasn’t been used for a while so it’s quite dusty. If you don’t sweep it while it’s light out we can’t use it to sleep in you know?”

“B, but...”

“Okay, so Arina can go shopping, can you do it?”

“.....uuu,..... auuuu, okay, Arina, will go back, and sweep...”

Arina sank back to her seat dejectedly.

“All right. Yuu-kun... let’s go!”

I’m sure I misheard Mist mumble ‘I won’ there somewhere.

“A woman’s will is trully terrifying, huh”

“Well, it’s fun for those of us watching by the sidelines”

Koji and Kars muttered something, but I pretended not to hear and left the bar-room with Mist.

Chapter 44

Castle Town Market

In the castle town of Ivan, there is the symbolic white Ivan Castle in the north. The town spread out left and right from the brick-paved central street that came from that castle. Right in its center there was a market crowded with stalls and peddlers and a gigantic fountain equipped with a magic device. Branch roads radiated out from there in all directions.

From above, the town looked like a cut-up pizza.

The town was surrounded by the massive walls protecting it that doesn't let monsters or trespassers through.

In order to enter you need to pass through checkpoints.

The south part is heavy on the trade institutions and as you go further north it turns more and more into housing.

On either side of the roads that stretch all over the city, there stood three story row houses made of stone where the people living in this city: merchants, soldiers, or artisans, could rest their bodies.

Moreover, as you get closer to the Ivan castle, you will see libraries, art galleries, theaters, cathedrals, and also the elite housing districts where the residences of government officials and high ranking knights live are. Though the common folk don't come near the place in their daily lives.

"...so, you should be able to understand it this way"

Mist explained for me, pointing at a map.

"Yeah, you made it quite easy to understand. *Gracias*," I said, to which Mist smiled.

“If it’s the castle town, I think you can just about get anything”

“First we look at what’s there, should we?”

“I guess so... Since we’re putting tableware off until later, we should first go for magic cores, then some change of clothes”

I took a pen and note block from the E:ID phone and took notes.

“Also, unless we don’t go and fetch fruits and hardbread, we’ll be in trouble once the shops close”

“I see. You don’t have convenience stores here”

“Conveni?”

“A store in my world that stocks everything. It opens all day and doesn’t close even in the middle of the night”

After all this while, I can tell Mist everything honestly.

About us coming from another world, about Arina being the Hero, and others besides that.

Mist thought I was joking when she first heard, but she’s seen the power of the E:ID phone, so she quickly believed me.

...well, the smartphone is a piece of rather overly advanced technology even in my original world, after all.

“Hmm... , won’t the person keeping the shop die like that?”

“They hire people to take turns working there... though there *are* people who collapse from overwork”

While having small chat with Mist, I finally reached the central market.

At the place we reached there were merchants underneath roofs like the eaves of a house made by just stretching a piece of cloth, yelling at full volume to attract customers.

Around them there are bustling crowds of people jammed together like there was some kind of event.

“There sure are a lot of people...”

I now understood why Mist said ‘we should go to the market while our load is still light’ on the way here.

We can’t go through this crowd if we carried other shopping items.

Well, I *could* just put them away in the E:ID phone, though.

“Come, let’s go!”

A high-spirited Mist took me along and charged into the place.

We headed towards our destination shop by parting the sea of people, which was almost like a full body slam attack.

But just like the jam of people in a crowded train, we almost couldn’t get through.

“Sheesh!! Even though I could easily pass through if I turned into mist”

Mist yelled, part angry, part irritated.

“Nah, you better not. What about your clothes after that? You’re not going to go shopping naked are you?”

“S, s, shopping n, n, naked — !?”

I only wanted to make a little retort, but Mist reacted more than I imagined.

“W, why does it have to be that! Why does it have to be that situation!!” she said with a red face.

“No, well, your clothes come off when you turn into mist, right? and you can’t go shopping while you’re in mist form, right? That means you’re going to have to go shopping stark naked”

“S, s, stark...”

For an instant, Mist put her hands to her cheeks and took a deep breath, *hooh*.

I wondered what’s going on with her, but then...

“Stupid—!!! N, n, no way I’m doing that!!”

She suddenly blew up.

“Not going to do that, *definitely* won’t! Naked! What the hell! No way I’m doing that!”

She said incomprehensibly.

She made so much of a ruckus the other passers-by looked at us, wondering what happened.

“H, hey hey! It’s just a little joke, don’t be so angry...”

“It’s cause Yuu-kun thinks up something stupid! Ah, geez, aaaah!! It’s embarrassing!!”

“I get it, I get it, just, calm down. Let’s hurry and go shopping. Okay?”

“Right, shopping, hurry!! We were going to go shopping!! Come on, let’s go, hurry!!”

I totally did *not* get just what the blazes happened with Mist.

In any case, I had to chase after her so I don’t lose sight of her.



While Mist and Yuuki were going through seven hells in the crowd of people.

On the roof of a tenement right next to them there were two men, watching.

Buildings in these parts were built in rectangular shapes so they had wide roofs and made positions that were invisible from directly below.

The men, whose faces were hidden by their hoods, had the appearance of merchants, but their atmosphere clearly showed that they weren’t anybody honest.

They each locked on to Yuuki with small spyglasses.

“So that’s *Shimoyama Yuuki*...”

“Looks just as unusual as we heard. There’s no mistaking it”

They said to each other.

“I was wondering what kind of guy could take down Isky’s son”

“He doesn’t look like much”

The men smiled.

“What do we do with the woman?”

“It’ll be a pain if she made a fuss. We’ll deal with her as well”

Their eyes reflected Yuuki leaving the market for somewhere else.

“Let’s move,” said the men as they stood up to chase after Yuuki.

One of them jumped down from the six-meter tall building onto a back alley.

He then chanted, “ ‘Millifly’ ” to a magic core he brought right as he was about to collide with the ground. He then floated and landed safely.

He looked around to make sure it’s safe, and after he’s sure there were no people

around, he looked towards the roof and signaled,

“Oy, it’s safe!”

.....

“.....hm?”

But there was no response.

“Oy, what’s wrong? Get a move on!!”

As he said that wit irritatedly, something fell down.

The small something fell to the ground with a *clunk* sound.

The man looked towards it, but ignored it, thinking that it was a small pebble.

“What’re you doing!? We’re going to lose him!”

Clunk, another small white pebble fell as he said that.

“...?”

What’s that now? the man thought, tilting his head.

Another stone fell down.

This one’s bigger.

The next stone.

This one was long like a tree branch, but snapped as it hit the ground.

Suspecting something unusual, the man picked up the branch-like stone.

Then stones came raining down, each in different shapes and sizes.

Just when the man noticed they were ‘*human bones*’, a skull hit the ground with a *clonk* and cracked.

“Eeek!!?”

The man, who lived a life outside of human morals, became frightened and paled at the sudden downpour of bones.

“Oh my, I’m so sorry”

There was a young girl in maid clothes holding a broom and dustpan.

It was Arina.

“I didn’t know there was a person below. I have to properly make sure when cleaning trash”

She said as she gathered the scattered bones in the dustpan.

“T, trash...!?”

Seeing how Arina treated the bones like trash, the man became frightened and stepped back.

“Yes, that’s right. If we don’t properly separate trash, they’re going to become a problem later. See, people in this world still don’t know about these things... This is noncombustible trash, and...”

Arina then took out a large black plastic bag.

It was filled with something liquid-ish, it jiggles when she struck it.

“This is organic trash♪”

The man faintly realized.

Where the surrounding meat from the human bones that had been picked clean were.
What the contents of the jiggly bag is.

And ‘to whom’ those bones and the bag’s contents belonged.

“Ah, that’s right! This looks like it can still be used, Please take it if you like. It’s called ‘reuse’, you know what it means?”

Arina pushed some neatly folded linen cloth at the man.

The clothes of the man he talked to just moments earlier.

“Eeeek!? N, n, no way, these bones...”

The man trembled in fear, and Arina said to him,

“People who won’t answer Arina’s questions properly are not needed in Yuu-kun’s world, you see, and if you don’t need something, then it’s trash, right? Arina thinks about Yuu-kun’s world’s ecology, too. Arina separates trash properly... ah, but this is troubling”

She then put her hand on her face and made a troubled look.

“Arina ran out of trash bags. Arina’s bad with planning”

She made a broad grin.

“So to not create more trash, please pay attention and answer properly, okay? Who’s the one making you do this? And for what reason are you watching Yuu-kun?”

Chapter 45

Mist of the Shopping Street

We left the open air market and now we reached a shopping street with lots of shops. There was considerable traffic here too but it wasn't the jam-packed battleground that was the market.

"Sure enough, buying things in stores cost more money, huh. Not a lot of people come and do it", Mist explained.

Speaking of Mist, he's been mumbling stuff at the lantern shop owner for 30 minutes.

"Nah, warm colors are definitely better... ah, but I can't ignore the white ones, either..."

They're called Galle-style lamps in our world, interior lanterns that use magic cores.

Well, I understand that we'll need them to light up the night.

"Aren't you worrying too much...", I said, yawning wide.

"Lighting for the room is important you know. The whole room's mood depends on it"

"We can just get whatever for these things. Let's just get this one"

I pointed at a lantern with a decent size.

"NO! That eats up too many magic cores! We won't have enough no matter how many we have"

I was scolded.

.....don't make yourself sound like a housewife...

"Yuu-kun's too carefree. Lighting is important so we have to choose properly"

For a medieval fantasy world to even fuss about interior lighting is...

Either way, can't be helped that this'll take time.

I'm also worried about Arina left in the house, hurry up and choose.

"Ah, this one might be good"

This time I pointed at a lamp that looks like a crucible, Mist put on an utterly amazed face and sighed.

"What, it's still no good?"

“Ha ha ha. Sir, this one is a bug-catcher lamp”

The shop owner gramps smiled, pointing out my mistake.

So it's like one of those things hanging from a convenience store's awning. Well, now that I look closely, there's a flap on the entry, making it hard to escape.

It's well made...

“Sheesh. Yuu-kun should just shut up”

Feeling embarrassed, Mist pouted her lips and made a sign for me to go away.

“It's nothing bad. Let's listen to the housewife for these things”

“Housewife?”

Awh, I see.

If a man and woman argue about furniture, then it can't be helped if people think they're newlyweds.

And someone my age gets treated as an adult in this world, too.

“No no, we're... ’

“D-A-R-L-I-N-G ♪”

Just when I was going to correct him, Mist went completely on board with it.

“.....Why don't you let me choose a wee bit sensual lamp for tonight?”

“Stop it you're being lewd”

In the end Mist was full of herself being buttered up by the shopkeeper and chose a reasonably pricey lamp.

Such a good customer, sheesh.

Well, we did get a good sum in rewards from the palace, so we're not going to run out of money with just this much.

“I see, so we look like a newlywed couple. Ehehehe.”

Mist was happily skipping along the shopping street.

“Darling, why don't we look for a kettle next?”

“Don't get too cocky”

“Boo”

I wanted to cool her down here but Mist puffed her cheeks, pouting.

“.....but Yuu-kun, you didn’t try to correct the shopkeeper anymore? So you’re not totally against it after all?”

“.....”

I didn’t answer.

“Ah, you looked away. Don’t tell me you’re embarrassed?”

“I’m not embarrassed”

“You’re totally embarrassed”

“I said I’m not embarrassed”

It’s not that I didn’t correct him.

— I know how Mist feels, but I felt awkward to throw cold water on her there so I didn’t say anything.

I guess I’m taking the same attitude to Arina.

.....I might be too indecisive...

“Huhu. You don’t need to be so shy”

Said Mist, misunderstanding my silence.

“If you’re going to keep on teasing me, I’m going home”

“Tch. Fine fine, I get it. I’ll stop”

Said Mist, bored, but she then made a broad grin.

“.....but I can’t help it if people look at us that way, no?”

She said as she went back to skipping happily.

Well, I can’t go around correcting people...

I quickened my pace to chase after her, but just then, I saw a shop furnished with a show window.

A glass-sided exhibition window is rare in this world so it caught my eye.

“This is a craftsman’s shop”

Mist told me.

It was decorated with hairpins and necklaces, so I’d say this was an accessory shop if nothing else.

“Yuu-kun, you like wearing these things?”

“No, not me. I haven’t given Arina her birthday present. I thought I could just give her later and ended up being two days late”

“.....hmmm”

Mist snuffed her nose.

“Yuu-kun, you always think of Arina-chan wherever you go don’t you?”

“.....listen up, you, it’s not that Arina’s my love interest, you know? Just because it’s dangerous to leave her alone¹ so I get worried”

“You didn’t deny it”

“It’s not about denying or not... umm, aren’t you misunderstanding something?”

“I *hope* it’s just a misunderstanding”

Uwaa.

She’s angry, she’s totally angry.....

I guess I can’t tell her to wait while I go buy Arina’s present...

Or so I thought, but then...

“Go and buy it. I’ll wait”

Mist said to me, softening her expression.

“Eh, really?”

“I’d feel sorry for you if I teased you too much. Can’t be helped if it’s a birthday present”

As Mist said that she pointed at a brooch.

“How about that strongish-purple one?”

It was set with a thumb sized blue gem and had a simple silver trim.

It’s a little plain but it might be a match for Arina.

“It’s good. I’ll go buy it”

I don’t think I have much time to choose, too.

While the iron is hot, I went inside the shop.

“Excuse me,... that purple brooch, please”

“Yes. The «Indigo Blue» brooch then. Please wait a moment”

The plump shopkeeper in glasses said that as he brought out the goods.

.....then, he seems to be reminded of something.

“Dear customer, this isn’t meant to be a present for the young lady you were with, is it?”

“Eh?... it’s not”

“Ah, my apologies. Yes yes, that’ll be 5000 G”

It got caught in my mind so as I was taking out the money, I asked.

“.....why did you ask that?”

“Well, indigo blue is the color worn by widows. Not something you’d give to a young lady”

“I’m changing my purchase!!”

— That was close, I almost got caught in Mist’s trap!!

She was taking advantage of my not knowing this world’s culture and customs!

I switched to another item then left the shop.

“Why you little! Mist!! That was too much no matter —”

....., she’s not there.

Mist was supposed to be waiting in front of the store, but she’s not there.

I looked around but she’s not there either.

— ah...

Did she get angry and went home first?

I talked about Arina even though we’re alone together, must’ve been awkward.

Then I suddenly saw Mist’s clothes laying about by my feet.

“.....so she did a mist transform and went home...”

That would’ve been quicker for her.

I should apologize once I get home — wait a second!

This is bad!

She materializes if she gets too far from me, right!!

Considering the distance to our room, it's completely out of the E:ID phone's range, which means Mist was going to stand naked on the way there.

"That little!! She totally forgot about this!"

I have to chase after her... aaah, shit, but which way did she go?"

North? or south?... If I went the wrong way Mist was going to get naked sooner.

"Aaah, sheesh, this way!"

I can't afford to not go. I started off based on intuition.

"Huhu, Yuu-kun"

Then, I heard Mist's voice from my side.

"Y... , you, you're still nearby!?"

Seems she was hiding herself by turning into mist and was having fun looking at me moving about here and there.

She's pissing me off!

"Come out... ah, no, wait, don't come out! Just go home like that!"

"Don't wanna. Yuu-kun, turn around?"

"Huuh?"

I turned around.

There's a wide gap between stores, becoming some kind of back alley, then there's definitely Mist there.

.....she was back in her original body.

"Wha, wai, i, idiot...!!"

Though she's hidden in the shadows, she's totally naked in broad daylight.

I didn't know what I should do, but then Mist turned into mist again.

“If you don’t give me my clothes, I, won’t go home. — or do you want me to go home naked?”

She said so right to my ear, then once again turned to her original body in the exact same place and made a sensual smile.

She then went deeper into the alley.

“You idiot!!”

I ran into the alley.

Chapter 46

Twin Gangsters

Even in the castle town of Ivan, where the law and police organization is maintained, outlaws still also exist.

In the case of the Dobb Locke brothers, they were the boss of a group of gangsters that would cause anyone from this country to shudder up just by hearing their names. These identical twins show talent in all kinds of criminal activity, control the outcasts of society using violence, and rule the criminal underworld.

They also had links with a certain section of nobles, and would sometimes make a living by tidying up situations that could not be legally resolved.

The Dobb brothers' hideout was a cellar under a cabin disguised as a merchant's warehouse.

In that grey room without a ray of sunlight coming in, there were many bottles of alcohol and gold and silver furnishings.

As a warehouse forcibly decorated in luxury, you can't deny that the room was tawdry. In the innermost part of the room there was an Ivan national flag scrawled with graffiti, which strangely stood out.

The brothers and their henchmen had until today enjoyed a life of crime using this as a base.

".....you know, Arina doesn't like twins for some reason"

Arina sat crossing her legs on a long table in the middle of the hideout, speaking as if in a monologue.

Wearing an apron dress smeared with fresh blood, she held on her right hand a short sword that was one of the room's furnishings.

At her feet there were the Dobb brothers wrapped in a mat, sitting still as if looking up at her.

Their ugly faces were too painful to watch, covered in bruises and bleeding all over, and they had already lost the will to resist.

“You see, aren’t they a pain in the rear? They look just the same and their personalities are similar too. It gets confusing to pick out which one’s which, and the dumb parents who gave them birth even give them similar names to boot. So stupid, right”

One of the brothers gave a fleeting glance at the trash bags inside the room.

One, two... five in total.

Giving off an offensive odor, the contents of those bags were the henchmen working for them just a few hours ago.

The heartless young girl who entered all of a sudden first lopped the head of one off into the air without so much as a single word.

She dismembered the remaining people and before long had put them all into bags.

As bosses, the brothers were kept barely alive for the purpose of interrogation, but that’s water under the bridge now, Arina was now in the middle of entertainment.

“Which is why Arina came up with something good”

Arina flashed a smile.

“If one of them dies, then they won’t be twins anymore, right?”

“” EEEEK...! “”

Given the death sentence, the brothers froze.

“If you want another sibling, then please ask your daddy and momy, okay. Though I don’t know how a parent feels being coaxed by a son wanting a brother. — umm”

Arina pointed the short sword at one person.

“Well now, let’s kill the younger brother-san”

“N, no, help—”

Stab, the short sword was thrown and stuck on him.

The man’s eyes turned white and collapsed right away.

“U, UWAAAAAAAAAHHH!!”

The surviving brother screamed.

“Congratulations, now you’re not a twin anymore. In remembrance of the younger brother the older one should live live properly and —”

“B, big brother, BIG BROTHEEEEEEEER!!!”

“—eh, what?”

When the survivor ran up to the dead brother screaming, Arina noticed.

Aww man. Got the wrong one.

“Big brother, you can’t die, please don’t die!”

“Uwaah, so this one’s the younger brother...”

Arina had been acting the cynical character for a long time, but now that she’s killed the wrong man she can’t act cool. She awkwardly stuck out her tongue.

“...This is why I hate twins, sheesh...”

Arina was at a loss for what to do, but...

“BIG BROTHER, BIG BRO— GEH!”

For now she hit the surviving brother on the back of the head with her bare hand.

Looking down at the flopped down Dobb Locke brothers, Arina

“Umm”

racked her head for how to react to this situation,

“I killed the wrong one. Sorry?”

and made an incomprehensible apology, then left the murder site.

.....At least she had gotten the information she wanted.

She went to see the face of the one who aimed for the one she loves.

Chapter 47

Back Alley Seduction

A pair of soft looking buttocks were swaying left and right as if they were dancing. Each time the long hair sways, beautiful shoulder blades are exposed.
—Mist was prancing along the dimly-lit back alley, naked as the day she was born. I frantically chased after that back, exposing the transparent-white skin.

It was a nonsensical situation.

She's like this at the Isky manor underground, does she have an exhibitionist streak?

"Wait up you idiot! What are you doing! What happens if someone sees you!"

As I was yelling, Mist turned into mist.

.....or so I thought, but she appeared again right next to me.

"Ssssh!"

She raised her index finger to her lips.

".....Yuu-kun. If you're so loud people are going to notice"

"——..... ugh"

The breasts, the shoulders I saw at the bath were right next to me.

Mist smiled with a peach-colored slightly flushed face.

Because Mist suddenly appeared next to me naked, I was just about to hit my boiling point.

"People are going to look this way you know?"

"Y, yeah, t, that's right, can't be loud, —— *wait, no!!*"

I thrust Mist's clothes I was holding out at her.

"Put • your • clothes • on •!!"

I scolded her as silently as I can.

Mist then disappeared right away and materialized a bit ways away.

“Don’t wanna—. If you want me to wear it then catch me first!”

She threw me a kiss and wink, provoking me in more ways than one.

“If you don’t hurry, people are going to see me naked! Nooo, what’ll you do?”

“You’re the one who’ll be in trouble!”

“So why is Yuu-kun chasing me?”

“~~~~——!!”

In the end, I only didn’t like people seeing Mist’s naked body.

I get lightheaded every time I thought some other guy was going to see her.

I have to absolutely keep that from happening.

And so I ran.

.....I was made to run around for several tens of minutes.

Before long, I was able to corner Mist in a dead end.

“Huff... huff...”

Since Mist could transform cornering her means nothing, but she doesn’t seem to be going anywhere now and just smiled at me while I was breathing hard.

“Hurry and... , wear something..... already...!”

“Don’t wanna. Let me be like this some more”

“What are... you a... pervert!”

“Ehehee, maybe. Yuu-kun do you hate a girl like this?”

“.....”

If you ask me one way or the other I’d say *like*, but well, I ended up not saying it.

“What are you doing, suddenly taking your clothes off in a place like this! What do you want!”

I yelled at her.

Kyaa, Mist made screamed playfully.

She then said this with a happy face.

“Ehehe, hey, Yuu-kun. Who are you thinking about right now?”

“Huh?”

I scrunched my eyebrows, not getting what she meant.

“Fufu. I’m happy. Yuu-kun’s head is full of me right now. Not Arina-chan, not Princess Rosé, just the me right in front of your eyes. Hey? or are you still thinking of Arina-chan even now?”

“...You, did you do something this stupid just for that!?”

“Yep, that’s right. Sorry, Yuu-kun. Ehehe... Doing this in a place like this, is weird right?”

She said as she put her hands to her chest.

“But you know, what *can* I do? I’m, happy right now... *really* happy”

— Mist was acting weird.

Well, she’s been weird for a while, but right now she’s more...

Unlike just now, ‘captivating’?

“Yuu-kun is looking at me. Yuu-kun is worrying about me. I’m so happy I can’t hold myself back...”

Mist’s face was dyed in a pink color.

In her moist pupils, there was me.

Her hot and damp sighs disappeared into the outside air.

“I’m really really embarrassed being like this. It’s like I’m giving up my own self, like throwing myself away. It’s cold, it’s scary. I feel I can’t even defend myself, so helpless”

“But you know, no, because of that. Yuu-kun is next to me ‘*protecting me*’, I’m happy”

“Yuu-kun... look at me more. There’s a worrisome girl here you know? There’s a girl who’s going to get into something dangerous if you take your eyes off her you know?”

“This is awkward. What should I do. What happens if... you looked away?”

“.....”

I couldn't say a word.

So this is what they call being drawn into someone's eyes.

The gutsy and lively Mist was now binding me with her devilish smile.

I was captivated by that gap.

I feel like my thoughts are melting away.

“I, belong to Yuu-kun. I don't want it if Yuu-kun doesn't protect me. I don't want it if Yuu-kun doesn't look at me more. Right... , Yuu-kun...?”

Mist, standing there stark naked, bared everything, and said to me.

“If I say *please*... will you touch me this time?”

“.....!”

Mist said so, grasping me at my weak point.

The point where I get easily washed in the moment.

She sealed Arina away, and made me notice only herself, then...

“Otherwise, I, don't know what I'll do next?”

...She made me unbreakable fetters.

“Yuu-kun, you already know don't you. I can really do anything if I get serious”

Calculating everything up until now, she lured me in.

“It's okay Yuu-kun. Everything is my fault”

Ka-chink, ka-chink.

I heard the sound of locks being opened.

“Yuu-kun's only going along with my selfishness, because you're so kind”

The key shutting *something* away inside of me was gently released by Mist.

This is bad. Dangerous.

.....being alone with the two of us like this. There's nothing stopping us anymore.

I was lured by Mist, and onto those soft breasts——,

**reach*.*

“...huh, WHAAA!?”

Just I was about to grab them, they disappeared.

Because I was coming on rather forcefully I missed and almost fell forward.

That Mist! She went off and disappeared and turned to mist!!

“Eh, what the... is she making me wait!? After all this!?”

“What’s this about making someone wait?”

“.....eh?”

I heard a familiar voice from behind.

When I turned around, there was...

“P, p p Princess Rosé!?”

The noblegirl who just a few hours ago was looking down over us from the dais of the Royal Castle, was now here in a castle town back alley with a friendly smile.

“Ssssh! There’s no Princess Rosé here. Just the third daughter of a destitute noble, Demy”

“...H, huh”

Looks like that’s her setting this time.

Well she’s certainly wearing her Lady Demy hairstyle instead of her Princess Rosé one. Her clothes were also rather modest compared to her usual, although not down to Mist’s level.

“Why are you here!?”

“What about you yourself, Yuu-kun? What are you doing in a place like this?”

“Eh!?”

This is bad,... did she see me? She didn’t, right?

“You’re sweating so much in a back alley... What *were* you doing?”

.....Yep, looks like I didn’t get found out.

“I, I... got lost”

What a lame excuse...

But I surely can't say that I was doing something shameless with that mist girl floating around over there, right?

“Ara ara. You're not familiar with the place, must be hard”

Lady Demy unexpectedly agreed and worried for me.

“But still...”

Lady demy suddenly unfolded a feathery folding fan.

“It's rather damp around here, isn't it...”

She started fanning herself.

.....you're going to scatter Mist-chan all over the place you know...

“Since moisture causes mold, it needs to be fanned away properly. Those things rot bread and clothes and everything else, after all. Ah no no no!”

Lady Demy insistently oscillated her fan, making the humidity decrease.

.....

.....no way, was I found out?

“Ah, that's right, Yuuki-san. How's the room I prepared for you?”

“Eh, ah,... hm, it's rather good. I was just finishing up buying furniture just now”

“Is that so? But how about this. Can I help you shopping so you don't get lost again?”

“Eh?... umm”

.....w, what should I do.

I can't leave Mist alone, but then I can't let Princess see her naked.

Seeing me flustered, Lady Demy said.

“Is there any problem?”

“Ah, no... not really...”

“Then isn't it alright?”

“.....um..... okay”

Mist, sorry.

I'll leave your clothes here.....



The back street left by Lady Demy and Yuuki.

The female clothes left just like that there stood out.

There were no people, but after a few seconds of silence...

"Kuh..."

Even though there was nobody there...

"THIS • IS • FRUSTRATING • !!"

The sound of someone's grudge roared.

At the same time a naked young girl appeared.

"Damn that doggy princess! I was just this close to getting Yuu-kun...!"

Mist hurriedly put her clothes on.

"And she even stole the wife position from me as well!! Homewrecker!! Treating people like mold!! I'm never ever ever ever going to forgive her!!"

To launch her counterattack, she went out to the streets.

But those two had already disappeared in the shopping street full of people.

"They're gone... , I wonder where they went...?"

Mist looked around to her left and right, but then...

"Are you Mist-san who used to work in the Isky Manor?"

A well-built man wearing a tailcoat called her to a stop.

From the way he looks, he seems like some noble's servant.

"I... am"

Mist answered and the man nodded.

“A certain personage wants to meet with you. May I ask you to come with me?”

Chapter 48

Princess Rosé's Turn

I was walking through town with Lady Demy.

"So you've already taken care of most of the purchases, have you?"

"Ah, yes. Only things like the magic kettle left"

I can't help thinking about Mist who I left behind while answering.

I'm beat. I wonder if she could go home safely.

Well, that girl's got her wits together, unlike Arina, so she'll be fine, I think.

Rather, if she got angry and told me to go away, then I can't complain, I guess.

"Um"

After a while, Lady Demy asked with an apologetic face.

"Going shopping with me... is boring...?"

"Eh?"

"Yuuki-san, you've been sighing a lot for a while," she said, looking up at me with tears in her eyes.

"N, nononononono, it's not that!!"

I tried to gloss it over in panic.

"Really?"

"Yes, really"

"I'm glad"

Lady Demy smiled wide, and for some reason linked her arm with mine.

"Wait... , what are you doing!?"

Not even Mist would go so far as doing this, definitely!

In fact, if Mist saw us like this it'll surely turn into a bloodbath!

"This is not good I said!"

"You don't have to be so embarrassed"

"It's not about being embarrassed or not... this is bad you know, normally!"

“.....not allowed?”

“Not allowed! Let go of me!”

As I said that, Lady Demy...

“.....I see”

She said with a low tone and slowly let go of me.

It left a bit of a bad aftertaste, but at any rate, this is fine.

Phew, I let out a sigh, but then...

“By the way Yuuki-san. Being who I am, I have the power of the state, you know”

She started saying something somewhat dangerous.

“Ummm... Does this have something to do with just now?”

“Ufufufu, no, this has nothing to do with anything. Just a topic of conversation. If I were so inclined, I could seize your entire party from bed, take everything you have with you including that shining board, and throw you in jail, you know”

Did you know that? Lady Demy smiled.

If that happens I’d be dying in a ditch in another world.

“So you’re a tyrant. Lords like that don’t die a decent death, you know”

“Not at all. Just saying *if I’m so inclined*. It’s funny, isn’t it?”

What the hell is funny!?

To even bring political power into love affairs.

Ah, I see.

This girl’s the type that has a weird switch in her.

“Oh my, Yuuki-san, you’re looking pale”

Scary.

“Are you feeling well? Do you need to take a rest in the castle *jail* for a while? I kid, I kid. Ohohohoho”

Her smiling face is *really* scary.

“Umm”

I offered my right elbow.

“If it pleases milady, would you like me to be your escort?”

“Oh, no need to be so considerate”

“No, I insist”

As a matter of fact, it can’t be helped.

“Well, if you say so”

Lady Demy linked her arms and giggled, *fufu*.

“I’ve been wanting to do something like this”

Though she was smiling like an angel, the despot act from earlier still wasn’t gone from my head.

There’s Mist who launched a nude strike in broad daylight, and Princess Rosé who used political power as well, this is, how should I say...

“Both of you are just so self-interested...”

As I said that, the arm linked with mine suddenly became tighter.

“Even so, there is something I just had to have”

The girl snuggling up in my arm let out a soliloquy.

.....—— That’s hard to reply to you know.

“Huh?”

After a while, I noticed.

The town’s scenery had changed without me noticing, we’ve come to a somewhat dreary spot.

Traffic was scarce and it was silent as death.

Looks like we’ve left the shopping town and into the suburbs.

.....Is there a kettle store in a place like this?

“Is the store really this way?”

“Umm”

Lady Demy looked a little worried.

“.....I wonder if it is?”

“.....”

Uh-oh, this is...

“Um, Lady Demy, no, Princess Rosé. You did say you’d show me around, but have you ever been to town?”

“.....”

“.....”

She wouldn’t look me in the eyes, no she wouldn’t.

“I can read the words,” she said in desperation after being silently urged on by me.

“AAAAAH I KNEW IT!! YOU DON’T EVEN KNOW ABOUT THE TOWN AT ALL!!”

If I think about it clearly, a royal wouldn’t mingle with the commoners and wander around town.

She’s not Lord Yoshimune, either.

Unlike Mist who knew the lay of the land to a degree, Princess Rosé doesn’t have a clue where to go or what to buy.

“I, it can’t be helped, can it!? I’m a princess you know! I’ve never gone to buy anything on my own!”

“Whaa! *You’re* getting angry at *me*!? You’re the one who said you’d show me around!!”

“It’s because Yuuki-san got *lost* in that back alley! I don’t know what you’re really doing there, though!!”

Ugh, damn.

I’m 80% sure she knew what happened...

“A, anyway, we’re not going to solve anything by fighting. Let’s calm down a bit... um...”

I looked around and saw a small open café.

It seems to be just a tiny café.

“Let’s take a rest there and work out a plan”

Chapter 49

Suburban Open-air Café

The shop Lady Demy and I was going to was a small one compared to the bar I had lunch it with just several seats on the open terrace and counter seats on the inside.

It's the kind of small shop where a residence was opened up into a café.

Rather than a café it felt more like a tea house.

There was no sign of other customers, either.

Either we came at a time they had few customers, or that the shop doesn't have that many customers to begin with.

Rather, from the way it looks, it was completely devoid of people.

".....Do we just go in?"

"I, I dunno..."

An otherworlder and a noble estranged from the common masses wouldn't know the etiquette for a shop of this scale.

Can we just sit down here somewhere?

We looked at each other in front of the store, but that won't help any, so...

"Excuse us!"

I gathered my courage and called.

Then.

"Yes ye-s!"

An answer came from inside.

A short while later a small girl came running out.

She was wearing a maid's hairband on her short cut hair and a common linen apron.

"Welcome!"

She made a dazzling business smile.

Even though she'd be a grade schooler in my world, this girl's got her wits together.

"Can we go in?"

“Yes! Sorry, I was preparing things inside. Please sit wherever you like”

Thank goodness. I sighed in relief and sat on a terrace seat.

“.....”

“.....”

So.

.....What should I order?

There’s no menu, and I can’t read one even if there were.

The waitress girl smiled cheerfully while standing ready behind me.

They probably had ‘standard’ stuff, like where you have hot coffee in a coffee shop or draft beer in a tavern, they might have menus but I wouldn’t know about that.

— Princess, I’m counting on you.

I signaled her with my eyes and Lady Demy, after thinking for a few moments, resolved herself and slowly nodded.

“Leave it to me...!”

Shows how much a resolve she had to make an order.

Princess then turned to the girl and said this.

“Do you have Querl highland tea?”

“Eh?”

With an almost muddled sound, the girl’s shaking voice was heard.

“...I, I, I’m very sorry..... We don’t have expensive teas like that...”

“Eh? I thought it’s not that expensive”

“U, um... but even B-grade products cost no less than ten thousand gold per cup?”

That’s wealth disparity seen from a tea leaf.

If I’m not mistaken, the guards’ monthly salary is a hundred thousand gold, right?

The Engel’s factor¹ makes you roll on the floor laughing.

In place of the princess who gave up with tears in her eyes, I ordered.

“Anything you recommend, two”

“Yes! Please wait a little while!”

I should’ve done this from the start...

¹ «TN: Proportion of one’s daily income spent on food»

Once we've calmed down at our seats, we spread out a map and argued this and that. We don't know what stores are where anyhow.

The princess' local familiarity is limited to the north end's 'Noble district'

She has completely no clue about the shopping town.

Of course, I wouldn't know what goes where just from looking at the map.

Worse, the shops in this world doesn't have windows or display cases, so it's hard to know what the store carries from outside. There were signboards but since their trade goods is indicated with illustrations, it's all gibberish to an otherworlder like me.²

At the same time, the princess who usually looks down from above won't understand, either.

So in the end we have to brute force it. That said, if I don't come back with a kettle, I can't show my face to Mist who I left behind, so I was desperate.

"Shouldn't we ask someone to buy already?"

Finally, I came up with that proposal.

"Like, ask Cars or someone to do it"

"Knights aren't errand boys!"

"Well we don't *have* to ask those two. People who panics in a teahouse can only give up"

"....."

hmph, Lady Demy puffed her cheeks and put her teacup to her mouth.

".....don't wanna. Definitely no"

She's hardheaded for some reason.

"We have to buy a kettle with the two of us somehow"

She said that and had a staring contest with the map.

She's probably burning with rivalry with Mist...

Looking at her like this, she's just a silly little girl.

Which is shocking, because this is the Her Highness the Princess-sama who was sitting on the royal throne a few hours ago.

I can only wonder if she's someone else.

I don't think anyone in the Ivan Kingdom ever saw this side of her...

While idly having those thoughts, I watched the princess.

² «TN: e.g. an otherworlder in our world won't immediately associate ♀ with toilets»

“— Oi, get a fucking grip already!!”

A rough voice roared in the housing district, that gave me a fright.

Then CRASSSH, I heard something break.

I looked and found two evil-looking men blowing up at the girl.

When did they come in...?

“Please stop, there are other customers! Please go! Please!”

The girl begged, but they're not people she could stop.

“No use talkin to brats”

“Get the old man out, the old man!!”

...looks like things are going to go bad

Just when I was going to stand up.

“You're being rude to a girl, aren't you. Calm your heads down a little, please”

It was Lady Demy.

She stood up faster than I could move, rebuking their rudeness with a solemn grace.

“Huuh!?”

“Who the fuck are you!?”

The hoodlums turned their attentions on us.

“I'm the third daughter of a certain divested noble, Demy. If you have a problem, then let's hear it first”

“There's nothing to talk 'bout”

“S'easy, this brat won't pay up”

I see, they're debt collectors.

And they didn't even flinch hearing she was a noble.

"I already paid you didn't I?"

The girl yelled.

"You still haven't paid the interest!"

"It's five million up to today! Hurry up and pay up, bitch!!"

...Well, it's kinda shocking how clichéd this is.

They're definitely swindlers, aren't they.

"...I don't have that much money..."

Said the girl, holding back her tears.

"You can just work for the money?"

"Work at the Wame Kame and you can pay up in a year, you know?"

What's a Wame Kame?

...Well, I'm sure it's nothing decent.

"Wait. A loan with interest that big needs approval from the country or a noble"

Lady Demy fought back with the power of the law.

"Let's see which House put their seal on it. You won't mind if I examine the deed?"

"Tch,... what're you blabberin about!"

"Outsiders should just go home!"

One of the men raised a chair.

[Ready]

"[Skill] — 'Strike Bubble' !!"

"Huwhaaaaooff!!!"

The bubble stream I fired hit him right in the face.

"Looks like talk ends here"

Tapping the E:ID phone, I drew the hoodlums attention.

It's my turn now.

"You want to fight? I'll take you on"

"Bastard!!"

Hi raised his fist and sprung up at me.

Compared to the fake Marquis, he looks so slow a fly could've landed on him.

" 'New Recruit's Shin Guard'!! Equip!!"

[Ready... Equip!]

With extra leg strength, I quickly stepped aside and countered with bubbles.

"Damn you, using weird magic!"

The first hoodlum had revived and came at me.

Looks like I can't win this unarmed.

I wanted some kind of weapon, but the 'Knights' sword' but the damage of that is too big.

Ah, that's right.

" 'Frying pan', Equip!"

[Equip!]

Using the newly-bought frying pan as a weapon, I hit him in the chest.

After a delayed sensation, the enemy crouched down holding his stomach.

"Where did you pull that weapon from!!"

Every time an item or another came flying, the hoodlums shrieked.

"You want more? The next souvenir is a big one!"

['Salamander Cannon'! Make it to equip!]

I took out the SF cannon and pointed the barrel at them.

EEK they faltered.

"You haven't seen the last of us!!"

They ran leaving those parting words behind.

Chapter 50

Young Girl in Debt, Maar

Even though we've driven away the thugs, what I saw in my eyes was a disastrous scene.

The tables and chairs was scattered about on the terrace and several porcelain plates inside the store were broken.

The shop girl was sobbing while crouching down.

"The scoundrels aren't here anymore, it's alright"

Princess called out to her and she wiped her tears.

"I'm sorry for showing you something unsightly"

She made an awkward face unlike just before.

She hardened her smile and stood up, and started rearranging the chairs and tables.

She's clearly forcing herself.

"Like I said before, I am related to the Nobility. There should be something I can do. If it's all right with you, you can consult with me..."

Said the Princess, but...

"No. I can't trouble the guest any more than this"

"But..."

".....I'm sorry. Would you please leave for now?"

You don't need to pay, she bluntly rejected.

She probably judged she's at her limit of serving customers now.

However,

"Like I can just leave. We've forced them away today, but they're going to come back"

"....."

As I said that, the girl's face became crumpled.

“I... I know that! But, but...”

She then sat down hard.

“What should I do...!”

The tears that had been welling up finally broke containment and she made a loud cry, *uwaaaaaaa*.

“...I don't have a father”

After we set the girl down on a chair and waited for her to stop crying, she began to tell us her life's story.

“I heard that he was killed by a monster before I was born”

The girl's name was Maar.

Being left by the father whose face she never even saw, she was raised by her mother and grandfather, and the three of them ran a café.

At that time the shop was in a different town and slightly bigger.

“Then one day scary people came and said ‘Your father left unpaid debts, pay up now’”

“Was there a noble's seal?”

“There was. Grandfather rushed into the courthouse saying that there must have been some mistake, but they didn't even pay him any attention. ‘There's not even any need to examine’ they said”

“Woah, that's horrible”

I muttered, and Princess said...

“Probably, the name written on the bond belonged to a rather high-ranking personage. Examining it means doubting that person. Most government officials are conservatives, they'd want to avoid stirring trouble...”

Maar nodded in agreement.

The debt can't be paid even if they sold the shop, but there someone lent a helping hand.

“An Ivan castle town merchant, master Perry”

The rich trader Perry offered this to Maar and her troubled family:

‘I want to employ your mother as my servant. In return, I will shoulder your debt’

“He even prepared a new shop and a house to live in the castle town. Mother and Grandfather jumped at the offer”

And thus Maar came to the castle town.

However, the store he prepared was...

“No customers would ever come here”

It was rightly a low-income tenement house.

It was deserted, as if the prosperity of the city’s center was a lie.

But Maar did not give up.

Maar set out to town to advertise, she refined her smile and her service, her Grandfather made teas he was skilled in.

That way the shop saw prosperity of its own for some time.

But even that took a nosedive.

“There was a message from master Perry”

Maar gripped the cuffs of her apron tightly and said, trembling.

“It said... Mother ran... from work... **sob**. That is... Definitely impossible... **sob*!*”

Because mother ran away, the debt takeover was annulled.

The debt collectors from just now would come to the shop everyday, and finally customers became reluctant to come.

Her Grandfather could only earn the cost of food by working away, and now all Maar could do was imitate him and run the store, to at least get money flowing into the house.

Once ingredients stopped coming in the shop would have to close and Maar had to find other places to work in.

“...There’s no way Mother would run away... Even if the work was hard and she ran,

why didn't she come and see me. Why did Father's debt come out after ten years!?

Lies, all of them lies... **sob*!!*"

"—— Do you have a copy of the bond?"

Said the princess calmly.

...She looks very angry.

"I have,... but"

"Don't be afraid of their name. Nobles that make the people suffer using their name...

They will have to answer for this outrage"

Maar ran inside the store.

She then handed the princess a rolled up parchment tied with a ribbon.

Princess took it and scanned the contents.

...No matter which noble had their name on it, she's the country's princess.

If it's a matter of names, she definitely won't lose.

Or so I thought, but...

"——"

What's the matter?

The princess' face turned more and more pale.

"...t, this is... This is impossible..."

"— So it's impossible after all..."

Maar sat down hard in with a face like she's given everything up.

"...Nobody could go against Princess Rosé's seal, can they..."

"HUWHAAAAAAAAAATTT!?"

My voice was heard all throughout the neighborhood.

Chapter 51

Fake Rosé Seal

Princess paled and froze seeing the bond stamped with her own seal.

Of course she would, she was going to save a commoner riddled with unreasonable debt but it turns out to be related to herself.

“Well, but timewise, it’s weird, right? How is a note written ten years ago sealed by Princess Rosé? She’s the same age as us, right?”

Even the princess won’t have the faculties for consent when she was a child.

Then Princess, no, she’s Lady Demy now, said

“This is recent. The agreement written here is not the debt itself, but the fact that the family was taking over the deceased father’s debts... it also says that the backdated interest is also charged”

“Eh, seriously? You can do that!?”

“Sometimes, between merchants over large amounts of money. There are cases where it’s adapted for when captains pretend they were shipwrecked and channeled the goods into the black market. Since there’s a clear precedent there are nobles who would accommodate and judge such cases”

On this point Ivan Kingdom was still under the Rule of Man. «TN: As opposed to Rule of Law»

Everything’s decided over someone’s feelings on the matter.

“B, but I... I mean the Princess wouldn’t possibly accept this kind of thing! The Princess has never ever been consulted about debt notes before!”

Since the person herself said so then there’s no doubt about it.

“Even if there were, she won’t accept any more than they can pay!”

As Lady Demy’s voice became flustered, Maar silently shook her head.

“The Princess doesn’t know how people like us live”

“——!”

She didn't know that Princess Rosé was right before her eyes.

Hearing the cries Maar had kept inside her heart, Princess bit her lip.

“Just with this piece of paper, everything will be taken from me, my shop, my mother. I'm sure the Princess knew none of that”

Maar hung her head and smiled a little.

“And stamping a seal is such a simple thing, isn't it”

“T, that's not how it is — ! P, Princess, always thinks of the country and the people...!”

“— after all, it's even worse if that's not the case, right? There's no way that gentle Princess Rosé stamped her seal even knowing about it. Right?”

Lady Demy's face turned completely red.

I think Princess said it before.

[Princess Rosé was beautiful like a bouquet of flowers, a pure and innocent maiden]

[The people swallowed the propaganda on their own accord and treated me like some saint]

[I'm the Princess after all]

[I have to pay attention be the Princess whose portrait everyone wants to decorate their homes with]

Maar searched and searched for the reason why that Princess Rosé would want to corner her this far.

And this might be the conclusion she came up with...

“I, I... It's a fake, this seal...! The Princess would never do anything that betrays the people!”

Ah, this is bad.

Lady Demy's panicking.

I have to cover for her or else.

The Princess normally behaves calmly but has a bad habit of exploding when she

panics.

When that happens, if she makes a blunder she's going to take damage big time.

"That's right isn't it? It must be some kind of mistake. Some bad guy must have forged Princess' seal"

I cut in.

"But even if it's a fake, I can't do anything unless I have proof..."

"Tell you what, we'll go straight to the Princess and ask. 'Did you really stamp your seal?'"

Maar was startled.

"C, c, c, can you do that? I was even rejected at the courthouse...!"

"Yeah, leave it to us. Even though we look like this we're Princess Rosé's friends... Right Lady Demy?"

Lady Demy took a deep breath and put her emotions in order.

"Please believe in Princess one more time. She is not going to abandon you"



The two of us walked north from the residential ward.

Our destination is the Ivan Castle. Can't miss it.

"I'm sorry. Things turned out like this"

Princess Rosé smiled wryly.

"Looks like I got Yuuki-san involved again. We didn't manage to buy a kettle either. I was really planning to investigate about the hero Baccus together, too"

"Ah, you promised that, didn't you"

About the hero who might be Arina's father.

Looks like she remembered everything in the Isky residence chapel.

So she went out as Lady Demy for that...

"Eh, that reminds me, how did you put on the disguise?"

Princess Rosé's disguise needed a large amount of magic.

I don't think she can ask the castle's magicians to cast it for her personal matters...

Princess then showed me her ring.

“I asked Arina-san to make an item so I can transform at any time”

“Eh? Since when? How did she became that kind of convenient character?”

“Ah —, that’s just Yuuki-san being dense...”

“?”

“No, never mind”

I thought Princess Rosé mumbled something.

“But we found something we have to hurry up and do”

“Ah, right”

We have to cancel the fake seal as soon as possible.

We have to return Maar’s family to the happy family it once was.

“I thought I had become more useful for everyone. As a royal and a symbol of the country who will one day take over its reins. I was going to put all my efforts into it”

“You did well, Princess. You were so majestic in the audience hall today”

“But, I didn’t know anything. Where to buy kettles, how much the price of tea is, and that people are being oppressed under my own name. Isn’t that just being arrogant.

What Maar said was harsh, but it’s the truth.

Princess bit her lip and said

“— It’s a little frustrating”

She hung her head down.

She said it lightly but she’s holding it in quite a lot...

“If it’s you Princess Rosé, you can take it back right away”

It might have been irresponsible of me. I didn’t have any basis, but I comforted her nonetheless.

“If Yuuki-san says so, I feel a little bit encouraged”

Princess grandly nodded.

“Yes. This is also experience! Something I learned from walking around town with Yuuki-san!”

It's embarrassing being put on the pedestal like that, but thank goodness.

Seems like she's taking it optimistically.

“— Today was fun, in one way or another. I, have to go back to being Princess Rosé now, but... um...”

“?”

Princess' face became red. She said

“Every once in awhile, I'd like to be like this. I'd like to be y... 'your' Demy. Can I?”

“...what if I say no?”

“I'll throw you in jail of course♪”

I never had a choice did I...

Chapter 52

The Girl Standing on The Night's Stage

※ A few hours before.

“Are you Mist-san who used to work in the Isky Manor?”

After Princess Rosé successfully stole Yuuki from her, Mist was called to a stop by a young man in tailcoats. He was someone's servant, or from how he looks, a butler.

“That's... right”

Mist answered and the man nodded.

“A certain personage wants to meet with you. May I ask you to come with me?”

“No”

Mist immediately answered.

“That blunt!?”

“I'm busy right now”

I have to chase down a thieving cat whose hobby is to act like a dog here. Whether she's a dog or a cat aside, if I don't hurry up she's going to steal his heart.

I don't care if she's the princess or whatever. I won't give any mercy!

“Excuse me”

Mist broke into a run.

“Ah, wait. Don't go!”

The man blocked her way.

“If you left me here there won't be any meaning of me coming here! My master's going to be mad at me”

“That has nothing to do with me”

“Why are you so cruel!!”

Aah, the butler sighed.

“Sheesh, what do you want,” Mist sighed.

“To begin with, do you even think there’s any girl who’d just go along when you tell them to come with? Even a country girl like me has self-defense you know. I won’t complain if I can call the police though”

“W, well if you put it that way. But, look, I’m a cool guy. I’ll be forgiven even if did call you and an *incident* happened”

“Excuse me”

“Wait!! Please listen to me! No, you don’t have to listen, just come with me! Please don’t ignore me! Ignoring me hits the hardest!!”

She wouldn’t care about a man who settles everything on looks.

“Ah, that’s right, I have a message. Even though I look good my memory’s bad, huh”

Mist paid him no more attention and began chasing after Yuuki by the currents of the winds

” ‘Shimoyama Yuuki’s life is being targeted. If you want to know more, come immediately’ ”

...And stopped her feet.



Inside the dark establishment, the magic spotlights blinked furiously.

There was music with furious tempo playing.

The stage stretching from the back of the place to the center was surrounded by men on a low floor. They looked up toward the stage with sensuous eyes, waiting for the show to begin.

They erupted into cheers when the dancer appeared.

She approached the center stage, fluttering her trailing semi-transparent clothing.

The clothes exposed a lot, it accentuated her cleavage. Her youthful limbs greatly

stimulated the audience.

As the lighting illuminated the dancer, the establishment became more and more worked up.

It was Mist.

She performed a provocative dance she learned somewhere, seemingly caressing her own body. Every now and then, she would act as if personally interested in one of the audience — repeating it over several people — captivating the men.

Their sights fixated on her, as if she was being bathed in it, making her white skin flush. Feelings of revulsion, as if she was being directly touched, and the mysterious excitement that goes counter to that, welled up within her.

But her true feelings were intended for just one person.

In a corner of the establishment, a distance away from the stage, 'he' was there.

Yuuki, boiling with anger, his hands balled into fists.

'Mist's skin is being seen by other men'

'She's enjoying it, is she...?'

'Don't screw with me'

'Mist... Mist belongs to me alone!!'

He's different from the mixed bag of men surrounding Mist.

He, only he, was filled with a desire to monopolize, with envy, as his gaze pierced into Mist.

Yuu-kun, is watching me.

He is looking at me and me only...

That truth made Mist dance from the bottom of her heart.

—— Yuu-kun, don't worry.

—— Mist only belongs to Yuu-kun.

—— But... just a little more...

She can no longer stop her own mischievous heart. She showed even more suggestive acts to the men, and for Yuuki behind them, rousing his anger even more.

BAM! There was the sound of the wall being hit.

The scene changed.

Being called to the establishment's backdoor, Mist was harshly scolded by Yuuki.

"What the hell are you thinking, you ※※※! Don't you have any shame!!"

Under his abusive insults, Mist cowered, still in her costume.

She did not understand what his words meant, probably words from his world, but the fact that they held a woman's dignity in contempt was clearly handed through.

Yuuki rudely grabbed the frightened Mist's arm.

"I'll make it so that you can't show your skin in public again —!"

"Yuu-kun, stop, I won't do it anymore!"

"No, you *will* do it again. You're a ※※※ing * * * after all...! I will mark you so that anyone who can see will know that you belong to me!"

"I, it hurts! Stop, don't be so cruel!"

While begging, an unexpected pleasure wrapped around Mist.

Yuuki violently vented his emotions on Mist, enrapturing her, making her feel like melting.

Yuu-kun, go on and take everything from me.

Carve your name into every bit of me —

"Hey, are you listening?"

"Hauu!?"

Just when it was going to turn into a bedroom scene, Mist came back to reality.

She was in a nighttime bar in the west of the castle town. The main customers, of course, were the lustful kind of gentlemen.

It was deserted now that it's light, the stage in the center also seemed lonely.

It was the stage Mist was dancing on just now.

—— In her fantasies, that is.

Mist herself had no experience with an establishment such as this, but she had heard Twys talk a lot about the passions of the night, so she had a faint idea of it.

When she dazedly imagined herself standing there, she ran out of luck.

Since she seriously fell in love with Yuuki, she had become attracted to the idea of exposing her own skin and attracting attention.

A wish with the small subtle addendum that Yuu-kun was somewhere at the end of one of those gazes.

Since when did I turn out like this I wonder...

Though her head somehow becomes hazy every time she thinks about that.

"Hey, you alright?"

The woman in front of her anxiously worried for her well-being.

The girl wearing a dancer's costume.

Mist slowly nodded.

"I'm fine. Just, thinking about something"

She dodged the question.

"Perhaps that's —"

"Influence from the 'bugs'?"

Kyahaha, she lightly laughed.

"....."

Looks like she had investigated quite a bit.

She was frank and outspoken, and seemingly not thinking deeply into something, but somehow she was hiding something deep. Mist once again focused herself and alerted herself against her.

When the strange butler took her here, the woman who was waiting said this.

[Thank you. Nice to see you! I see my 'sister' was under your care back in the Isky residence!"]

Her glossy hair was tied with a ribbon. The wavy hair springed every time she moved.

The cloth covering her body was rather scant, leaving her shoulders, belly, back, and legs exposed. What was covered were only her breasts and the center part of her lower body.

Rather, the fluttering, frilly design only put focus on the covered parts, so she thought. All that was emphasized by her cheerful youthfulness and charm.

The girl called herself Phinegar, it was clearly an assumed name.

[She said she was the second daughter of the Merry house. Looking at her getup, she must've been disinherited]

Which means, she's Princess Rosé's cousin.

Also, if Lady Demy really existed, she would be her older sister.

While being the daughter of nobles, Phinegar was a girl with a hobby of standing on stage as a mesmerizing dancer on the night streets.

"Looks like she did something bad, that Rosé-chan"

Said Phinegar, picking a fruit from the overflowing plate and putting it in her mouth.

"She introduced him to everyone today, didn't she? Isn't that like, bad?"

"By 'him' you mean Yuuki?"

Confirmed Mist. Phinegar laughed out loud.

"Is that supposed to be funny? What other boy could that bleach white virgin introduce?"

No, well, in the Isky mansion that woman was rather 'mischievous' though —.

She said 'Discipline me with your commoner's hand'. The impact was big you know? ...but let's leave it unsaid.

"I heard that Yuuki's life was being targeted"

"Weell, lots of people are going to be annoyed that Princess Rosé recommended Yuuki even though she had lots of replacements for Glenn. So, my job is something like this. I'm quite well-known you know. There's also 'papa' who does slightly dangerous jobs. So just some time ago, I heard a certain noble asking to be introduced to a 'contractor' who can deal with Yuuki"

"W... who did such a thing!?"

“Now now, let’s not be hasty... If you want to know, I’d like you to answer *my* question”
Phinegar put a fruit on top of her tongue and went “mmm” as she mouthed it.

“Honestly, the bugs that was meant for Rosé-chan’s body, really went in her, right?”

That was a ‘state secret’ that could shake the country.

If the truth came out, Rosé might be treated as ‘violated’ and lose her position.

At worst, she might be banished from the royal family and exiled.

Phinegar *was* an archduke’s daughter, albeit a rotten one. She surely knew that.

“What do you mean by asking that?”

Mist asked back, and Phinegar smiled.

“I want to bully Rosé-chan and get her to buy me new clothes”

She jokingly said. She meant to dodge the question with a silly excuse, but she was clearly planning on making light of things and leak it out.

“I don’t really remember. I was under the control of a bug at that time, after all”

Mist said, blurring the truth.

“Heeh, I see, hmm... and I thought I had a chance to steal Rosé-chan from Yuuki, too”

——..... , come again?

Chapter 53

Elixir System

“nhiihi, you’re looking pale, you know?”

Shoot, thought Mist, covering her mouth.

Having her desires seen through, she trembled slightly.

The one who quickly sensed it, Phinegar, made a mean smile.

“Look at this, Mailles. Seems like it’s a love triangle just like I thought,” said Phinegar.

“As expected of milady,” said the butler coming from the counter to pour some liquor.

Seems his name was Mailles.

“Say say, Mist-chan. Let’s work together. You steal him from Rosé-chan and I’ll pay you, then all will be OK!”

Princess Rosé was a powerful love rival. However, even if she knew her secret there were only few things that Mist, being a commoner, could do.

“Come on, I’m still a noble after all, you know? I have informants and connections. I’m Phinegar-chan whose face is known here and there. Praise me”

If it’s Phinegar, then she might be able to put in a word through, maybe.

—— This might just be the chance to crush her.

Mist was assaulted by a great temptation.

If she could disturb Rosé with a threat, even though there’s still Arina, Mist could shorten the distance between herself and Yuuki.

And then the time she could live a sweet life with just Yuuki will slowly come — maybe.

It was a once in a lifetime chance to defeat the Princess —

“Looks like we’re coming to a conclusion, aren’t we?”

At Phinegar’s prompting, Mist answered.

“Unfortunately, I don’t have the information you’re looking for”

— Mist threw away her card.

That person said:

‘There’s somebody I can’t betray’

In the face of temptation and danger, he said that and found his own path.

...Even though it hurt my chest that it wasn’t me...

Mist has one too.

Though she wanted to brush aside everyone else and win him, she doesn’t want to cause him sadness.

There’s no guarantee that Phinegar won’t make it public.

If he saw Rosé lose her standing, he would certainly be sad.

She doesn’t want to see him like that.

“— ... hmm?”

Phinegar disinterestedly snorted.

“Even though you finally have a chance to win against Rosé-chan”

“If, for the sake of argument, I do have something that could corner the princess. I will not win his heart if I defeated her with that. I can’t call that ‘winning’”

Phinegar showed a surprised look, somehow not expecting this.

“Thank you for the precious information that Yuuki is being targeted. I will warn him to protect himself”

Mist bowed her head and quickly left the establishment.

This district meant for the nightlife business was sparse in people right now that the sun was still up, it was quiet. Mist hurried towards where Yuuki was to tell him of the danger. However,

“Hold on there”

Phinegar came out of the establishment and told her to stop.

“I suppose I can tell you the name of the noble who wanted Yuuki dead?”

“Eh —, really?”

Even though the negotiation failed...?

“I think I like you, Mist-chan, so I’ll give you this as a special freebie♪”

Phinegar looked to her right and left to see if it’s safe, then,

“— Lend me your ear, this is a secret. The criminal is...”

Mist nodded, and Phinegar said in a small voice.

“Me”

“Eh?”

[ready]

There was a familiar voice.

It was the same voice as Yuuki’s item that he called the E:ID.

Mist’s body moved backwards on its own, and her feet left the ground.

She was floating in the air.

Bound by either by magic or some other inexplicable power.

Turn to mist... no, without Yuuki here she couldn’t transform...!!

“If I can’t make you talk, then I’ll ask your body directly, I suppose♪”

Phinegar unfastened the hairpin on her forehead, and it quickly turned into a staff that’s as long as she was tall. At the end of it was a bewitchingly purple glowing orb.

“Or rather, let’s ask the ‘bugs’ inside of Mist-chan”

“There are no ‘bugs’ in me!”

Mist had resistance to the bugs.

That was why she successfully spat it out earlier than anyone else.

“Kyahaa☆ Sheesh, don’t you know that you forgot?”

...What’s she talking about.

“Milady, of course she didn’t know, she forgot”

Mailles appeared.

“Ah, I suppose you’re right”

This is bad. Not that she gets what was going on, but this is bad.

Phinegar was not just any runaway noble!

There's definitely something different about her!

Being tortured by the threat of danger, a strange déjàvu appeared in Mist's mind.

...there was one time that she let her guard down against an enemy and was tricked...

"Get ready – ☆"

Phinegar then thrust her staff at Mist.

"— GAA! HAA!"

A terrible discomfort, like her body was being gouged out.

Mist was taken aback by the sensation of sewing needles running through her blood vessels.

Then those needles raced towards the center of her body and pierced it.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA—!!"

Mist screamed.

The needles ran freely around in her body, gnawing it as if searching for something. *It hurt — it hurt...!*

"Now then, let's check everything out, shall we. What is Shimoyama Yuuki? What did he do to Rosé?"

No, stop... Don't look —!

Don't just do whatever you please with this body that belongs to Yuu-kun!!

"What the hell, I can't see anything! Ah, whatever, Ei!"

"GUUUH!!"

The needles became bigger.

It hurt so much she felt she'd faint.

It hurt. It hurt. Tears spilled out because of her frustration.

"H, help... me..."

"Yeees, no use no use. No-body's coming to help"

"Help me —, Yuu-kuuuun!!"

[Emulator set up!]

“nuclear missILLLEEEEEEE!!”

— The voice reverberated from afar, and immediately drew near.

The thing that launched itself like a cannonball

“PUUUUUUUNCH!!”

[Action!!]

Impacted next to Mist.

A shock wave shook the sky.

Dust covered Mist, robbing her vision away.

Having been released, Mist could not prop herself up and collapsed — but, someone lightly caught her.

“Sorry for leaving you behind”

Was the first thing he said.

“You made it in time, so I’ll forgive you”

Mist answered, and Yuuki nodded.

— and then.

[Ready]

“Clench your teeth. I’m *really really* angry right now!”

Readying his sword, he glared at the enemy.

“Hee, aren’t you the cool guy. You’re a nicer guy than I’ve heard!”

Phinegar said relaxedly.

Perhaps because she took a distance right away, but there was a large gap between her and Yuuki.

“But you know, it may be a bit impossible to win against me?”

Phinegar readied her staff, and then.

” ‘Salamander Cannon’ ”

[Ready]

“— eh?”

Hearing the same voice like his own weapon, Yuuki let out a surprised sound.

Hehem, Phinegar smiled as she swung her staff and chanted.

” ‘Mount Weapons’ ☆”

[Make it to equip!]

Phinegar transformed.

On her two shoulders there appeared a pair of miniaturized battleship gunports.

A vividly colored metal breastplate over her suggestive dancer clothes.

Seeing that, Yuuki...

“M, Magical... Girl?”

Uttered an incomprehensible word.

“That replica of yours can’t possibly win against my Elixir, right? Or do you want to try a shot?”

Phinegar readied her pose.

Chapter 54

Phinegar Ars Magna

I wanted to take Lady Demy all the way back to the castle, but sadly, since she went out incognito I couldn't accompany her all the way to the end so she reluctantly said goodbye and turned towards the Nobles' ward.

I then loitered around the shopping town, still looking for a kettle.

Well, if I went back without buying one, Mist was going to yell at me...

Then after asking a passerby for help, I somehow found the store in ten minutes, but this time I racked my head over what to buy. From the chat with the lantern shop owner I knew I'm not good with judging items. That said, if I went back with a random one — no, no matter how you put it I'll definitely be yelled at once I get back. I have to prepare myself.

Anyway, I should at least hold on and bought something reasonable.

PIRIRIRIRI.

The E:ID phone rang.

"Ah, a call. — *A CALL!?*"

Oi oi, I'm in another world right now!

Who the hell is calling me!

[Hello, Yuu-kun? It's Arina]

"SO IT'S YOU AFTER ALL!"

I reflexively retorted in front of the store!

[Dddddddd did I do something bad?]

"HUH? Eh, what, what's going on? How are you phoning me just like that!?"

[B, but I have an E:ID phone, too...]

“SO YOU HAVE ONE TOO AFTER ALL!”

Well, Arina’s a student at the college town’s school Oumi academy too, so of course she would have an E:ID phone just like me. In fact, since the developer of the Elixir-Replica System was Arina’s mother, Emiko-san, it would be weird if she didn’t have the exact same thing as mine.

“No no no, hold on a sec. You can just handwave the base station and how you dial the number with magic cores, but *say something earlier!!*”

[Y, y, you didn’t ask...]

Yep. I didn’t ask.

“No, but still! If you had one then you didn’t have to go missing back at Occa village! We could’ve settled that easily with a phone!!”

[Ah, you’re right...]

Ahahahahaha.

I spun myself around once like a piece of broken garbage.

The shopkeeper was watching me as if saying “what are you doing making all that racket by yourself”

Well, in this world without phones, it’d look like I was talking and yelling to myself. I couldn’t stand it and left the store.

[A, m, m, maybe it’s bad to call right now? I... I’m sorry!!]

“No, the phone call itself is fine. I’m just surprised that it went through”

“Nah, I can’t spoil the mood between you and Lady Demy. S, sorry, Arina, isn’t considerate enough...”

“Yer gettin’ it wrong! Why are you acting like... wait, hold on? How did you know I was with Lady Demy?”

[Eh? Well, since you’re not with Mist-chan then you must be with Lady Demy, right?”

“Don’t factorize me weirdly like that! But, how did you get it exactly right, goddammit. Lady Demy just got back earlier... Is Mist there?”

[Ah, AAAH... t, t t t that’s right!! Yuu-kun, this is bad! Mist-chan is!!]



A girl wearing a pastel-colored costume was standing on the crater-like cavity on the road. She was holding a staff that was as long as she was tall, and was wearing a three-piece haori and skirt and a large ribbon on her back.

At the tip of her staff was a large crystal ball, and charms attached to her head, ears, and wrists.

Her upper body was clad in metal armor, but its pink color and heart-mark inlays made it look more cute rather than imposing.

But what draws the eye the most were the two shoulder cannons.

She looked just like a...

“M, magical girl?”

“Yeay! Did Phinegar-chan’s Super ☆ Transformation surprise you?”

The girl made a pose doing a V-sign on her forehead.

“Hello, Yuuki-kun. I’m the alchemist Phinegar-chan, nice to meet you – ♪”

She was the type of girl that, how should I say, *likes to play around*, or maybe *acts all cute and hyper*. She was wearing something kinda bold before she transformed, too...

Also, I think I’m sure she said Salamander Cannon just now?

The Salamander Cannon was one of the weapons fitted in my E:ID phone.

The Magical Girl’s shoulder cannons looked similar, but in that case how did she get the same kind of weapon as me?

“I don’t really get it, but I’m going to make you say sorry for doing bad things to Mist!”

“Eh? You’re looking for a fight? Your replica can’t possibly win against my Elixir, you know?”

Then Phinegar winked and said,

“But do you still want to try a shot?”

[action!!]

The first one to move was Phinegar with Bombardment.

BOOM, BOOM, Magma Shells exploded.

“Damn! Strike Bubble!!”

[action!!]

I made a Bubble Barrier to protect me — but it failed!!

The shells easily pierced the bubble and came straight at me.

“Defense Magic!!”

— BAM, the magma shells exploded.

It was Arina.

I thought I told her to go hide somewhere, but I guess she can’t just stay silent and went out.

“Y, Yuu-kun, I’m sorry!”

Arina rushed over to me.

“I came out...”

“No, well, you saved me”

Honestly, if she didn’t appear I would’ve been screwed.

I suppose I was relying on the Bubble Barrier too much...

“Huh—? Who’s the plain little girl? I never heard about you?”

A butler-looking guy appeared next to Phinegar and said,

“Arina-san who works together with Yuuki-san in the Isky residence, I hear...”

“Hmm~ An extra? Anyway, how many girls do you have waiting on you, Yuu-kun?”

“Don’t say *waiting on me!*... ah, but um, I guess I can’t deny all of it”

“Deny all of it now!”

Mist pinched me hard.

“Um, can you have a lover’s quarrel somewhere else? You understand Phinegar-chan’s power now, right?”

Phinegar pointed her staff at me.

“— Now, I’m going to go at it a little more seriously, okay? If you don’t want to get blown up answer my questions”

She said without a trace of her playfulness left.

“Shimoyama Yuuki, who are you? Where did you come from? What did you do to Rosé

and to Mist-chan there?”

“...h, huh?”

What the hell is she saying?

“It’s no use playing dumb. I can see it slightly. There’s something other than the ‘bug’ inside Rosé when she came back from the Isky residence”

“Yuu-kun really doesn’t know anything!”

Mist yelled.

“Listen, Mist-chan. You can’t trust this guy. He erased your memories. — Don’t you feel that there’s something out of place?”

“Eh...?”

The absurd statement made Mist falter.

...Looks like she has some baseless misunderstandings about me...

“All right, I get it”

I put my sword away in the E:ID phone.

“I don’t really know what you’re talking about, but let’s talk”

“Talk...?”

I nodded.

“I’ll tell you all I know. Even about Mist. I have a responsibility. I don’t really know about Princess Rosé’s body, but I’ll tell everything I know just in case I might have had some influence there”

“Eh. What’s going on where. It’s a bit unexpected, but, hey Mailles, what should I do?”

The butler called Mailles groaned.

“I’ve been thinking it for a while, but don’t we seem like the bad guys here?”

“Eh? No way. Seriously? Uh oh. Well, can’t be helped”

[action!!]

“Eeh!?”

Even though I said I’d talk, she did a surprise attack on me!!

Arina defended me again, but,

“Talk? Responsibility? You expect me to *believe* you? Yuu-kun, don’t you think you overdid it when you made Rosé your love slave?”

BOOM, BOOM, bombardments came at me one after the other.

“If you can’t say it properly then Phinegar will. You’re not the only one who used the ARN to meddle with this era you know”

“ARN? U, um, I really, *really* don’t know what you’re talking about!!”

“I know you’re trying to do the same thing Glenn did. — I’m not going to let you...!”

[‘Fenrir Lancer’. Make it to equip!]

Phinegar’s bombardment stopped, and in exchange her staff turned into a lance.

At the same time, the air around us became cold.

Since it had the name of the ice monster Fenrir it’s supposed to create ice, I guess.

“I’M NOT LETTING ROSÉ TURN INTO THE DEMON LORD!!”

Readying her not-normal-by-any-means lance, Phinegar broke into a run.

This is bad, I’m really getting killed this time —, but then...

“HEY YOU LOT!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE!!”

Fweeee, a whistle sounded.

A guard, a policeman of this world appeared.

“...whoops, this is *not* good”

Phinegar’s lance turned back into a staff.

Looks like even she doesn’t want to get in trouble with the cops.

“This is not like me to get so heated. *Not* cool”

“Indeed, *not* cool— oof!?”

Phinegar punched the butler who agreed with her.

“Yuuki-kun. Let’s leave it at this for today. Whoop!”

She stabbed the ground with her staff and the craters we made turned back into its original paved stone road.

“Be ready next time we meet. Bye, let’s play again later”

Phinegar made a peace sign and disappeared.

“.....”

We stood there amazed for a while after the girl who appeared like a storm

disappeared, but

“Aaaah, we have to run away, too...!”

“R, right!”

I don’t know what to say if we get caught.

Mist turned into mist and blinded the policeman while we used the time to escape.



“— please explain one more time,” said Rosé pointedly in an office inside the castle.

There were paintings and sculptures in the room, and in front of her there was a table with white cloth spread over it.

The furniture would lead a stranger who’s unfamiliar with the customs of this world to think this was a place where nobles eat. This was the meeting room where royals and officials would personally meet with members of the senate. The impression of *an eating place* was not too far off the mark, because this was a country ruled by royal command, and the peculiar custom was that it was done with food and tea on the side. This room was furnished and named for that.

The one sitting in the white seat was Princess Rosé in a white dress. One of the consuls was seated across from her.

“With all due respect, Your Princessly Highness’ command to ‘override the fake seal’ is not practically doable at this time”

The old man was speaking politely but with a somewhat businesslike tone.

Rosé scrunched her eyebrows.

“So you’re saying you are going to leave the imitation bearing my, Rosé’s, name alone?”

“That would be preposterous. However, the fake was actually made with delicate precision. Even we who inspected it was fooled”

“Well it certainly did surprise me. Which is why you should do something as soon as possible”

“Your Ladyship, we can’t invalidate it. It’s already become the real thing. If we did invalidate it then the real one would lose its value too”

While it's true that if such an elaborate imitation was circulating around the real thing would've gotten rolled up were it to be invalidated, but nevertheless, she couldn't let Maar's family die and do nothing about it.

"Then please make me a new one. Let's investigate all the current seals and only stamp the ones I approve of"

"Your Highness, are you saying you would allot tax funds for that work alone?"

"We can't be frugal. There are people who will suffer tomorrow's living because of the fake seal"

"Your Highness, if we do that, we will have to reassign some from military expenditures. But now after Marquis Isky's fall, the situation with Cidre is unstable. The enemy would likely sense what was going on with the reissue of the seal. In the worst case, the whole country would go down just for one citizen"

ISKY AGAIN...!!

Alone in the office, Rosé had her head in her hands.

'Capture anyone who was caught using the fake seal, will this be alright?'

The consul left with that conclusion.

That's going to be too slow.

Who knows how long that man would take until he found the criminal, who knows how long until Maar gets lost by the wayside.

She made Maar a promise she can't betray.

And yet, she couldn't do anything.

So the clean and pure Rosé is this powerless...

[Princess Rosé can definitely do something right now]

Reminded of the words Yuuki said, Rosé raised her head.

"Not yet...! There's still something I can do...!"

Chapter 55

Arina's Confession

The King ruling this country had been ill for a long time now.

King Ivan — Vin Sauvignon Grand Cru Ivan, was lying down quietly in his bed. His once lively and bright eyes were now hidden behind deep wrinkles, and his richly grown moustache swayed with each pained breath.

He himself understood very well that he does not have much time remaining.

He had carried out the grand task he took over from the previous King, governing the country in stability.

However, he still had lingering attachments to this world. Namely, that he has not found a man worthy to be his heir.

Until he saw the next King with his own eyes, he can not close his heavy eyelids.

As is always said about his kind, he held on to life with an iron will.

“— Excuse me”

Right then, a woman entered the room.

Rosé Vosne-Romanée Grand Cru Ivan

The King's one and only daughter.

After sending out the physician who was always caring for him, King Ivan called Rosé to his bedside.

“Rosé. You look like you've been running around with something in your mind. The officials told on you while visiting me”

“I apologise for the trouble, Father”

Rosé bowed her head down deeply.

Though they are father and daughter, as royalty they cannot dispense with formalities.

“What is it, I can give you advice if you will have me”

“Please do not worry. I have made you anxious enough”

“I don’t mind. Ask away”

Urged by the King, Rosé closed her eyes in thought.

“I, Rosé, have discovered a fake of my seal. Shimoyama Yuuki was the one who found it”

“That stranger? We owe him greatly for the Isky matter, as well, don’t we?”

“Yes. He was entrusted with a bond letter from a commoner in crushing debt, and of all things it was sealed with Rosé’s seal”

“Is that true?”

“Yes. I have seen it for myself. There’s no way a royalty’s seal would be used for a loan. And the people are suffering because of that false seal. We have to do something quickly”

“The heavens are always watching. The truth must come to light”

“That is right. So, please at least consider to cancel the debt, ”

“—— But Rosé, You are royalty, one who would govern the country”

“——.....”

Her statement interrupted, Rosé knitted her eyebrows.

“A ruler that always looks at what’s by her feet will lose sight of the bigger picture. You have to see things from a wider angle, Rosé”

“But...”

“That is not your job to do. Do you understand?”

“But”

“Leave that to the police. All you have to give is the order ‘do something immediately’”

“.....*gasp!*”

Not even given a chance to explain, Rosé’s fists shook.

“F... Father, are...”

Then,

“Are you saying I should let the person who had everything taken from them to just die!?”

Unable to contain her anger, she vented it out on the bed.

“You still don’t understand, Rosé! You’re talking about one person out of hundreds of thousands! There are many many more people who are suffering... guhu!”

gaha, the King let out a pained cough.

“F... father!”

In haste, Rosé tried to call out to him, but

“Wait... Rosé, I’m alright. Gefu, I still have something to sa... , gefu”

A wheezing sound came out from the King’s throat, but as if understanding his body’s way of restraining himself, the King calmed down and said thus.

“Listen Rosé, listen well. The reason why we cannot save a single person, do you know why?”

“Because we have to save a lot more people”

“Yes. That’s right. That’s how we royals – rulers are”

“Yes, I understand Father. I have done your body harm, please rest yourself...”



After running away from the Phinegar girl, the three of us, Arina, Mist, and I, returned to our rooms. With the light of the setting sun, we hurriedly tidied up the appliances and goods we bought.

It was a wooden, ten-tatami sized room, with three beds in the center. There was a simple kitchen at the back, and after putting in the cupboards and table, there weren’t much space left over.

Temporary as it was, this was our new home.

When I was a kid, I once played over at a friend’s house in a housing complex. This

gave off the same impression.

It felt a little cramped for the three of us to live in, but since I didn't feel like staying that long, this was enough.

That said, this was another world.

We should set things up as much as possible so we don't lack the necessities of life.

"So, what *was* with that girl"

I brought up the subject to the two girls while putting the dishes away.

It was about Phinegar. That magical gal had been having it for me while saying things I don't understand.

"M, hmm... Yes, it's quite confusing"

"I said I wanted to talk, but what did she do? She shot me. Sheesh... how did she get a Salamander Cannon anyway?"

"Umm, even if you ask dumb Arina"

"Well, you being an idiot doesn't have anything to do with it, even though you are. She asked where we came from, and even though she misunderstood some things, she knew who we are. Should we go ask Emiko-san?"

"Mother? But we're in another world?"

"Figures..."

It's amazing how irresponsible she was sending us to another world without explanation.

"I'll fiddle with the E:ID phone later. There might be a way to contact her"

I said so and picked up the lantern.

"Say Mist. Where should we put this?"

"....."

"...? Mist?"

Mist, who was picky with interior, was sitting there looking blankly at the ceiling.

"Mist, hey!"

After calling out to her two or three times,

“S, sorry. What was that again?”

She finally responded... she seems a little strange.

Mist had Phinegar tampering the inside of her body.

Arina judged that she was fine, but this is a world where somewhere, something like Glenn's 'bug' might be doing something.

“Hey, are you alright? Have a rest if you feel sick”

“Nah, I'm fine. The lantern goes here, I suppose”

She said, picking up the lantern, and then stopped moving again.

“...hey, Mist?”

“—! Y, yes!”

Mist put the lantern down and sighed.

“Mist-*chan*, do you think you're feeling sick?”

Even Arina noticed and asked worriedly.

” ‘I think you should go take a walk for a while’ ”

...?

Arina's voice was strangely commanding.

Unlike her usual head-down, fidgety feel.

“I... suppose so. I'll go get some air”

Mist nodded and went outside.

“Will she be alright on her own,” I wondered.

But Arina said, “Mist-*chan*'s not like Arina, she's all together-like. So, um, she'll be fine, she'll be back for bed by nightfall,” somewhat trustingly, irresponsible even

She then finally smiled and said, “you can see her in pajamas!” while making a guts pose.

“Are you dumb. This isn't the time for that”

“R, really? But Yuu-kun has seen her naked so you're already”

“Already what! Huh!? What're you trying to say!?”

“B, but, living under one roof will make a new sprout bud...”

“Goddammit, you’ve said it! Even though I was trying not to mind it!! This boy in puberty was trying to not mind it!!”

“I, it’s okay! Arina, will try to pretend to sleep!!”

“That’s completely unnecessary!!”

...sheesh.

This kid always has a habit of saying things like that.

.....

“Say, Arina”

There’s a little something I had to make clear.

We don’t get many chances to be alone with the two of us, so I better prepare myself.

“What do you think of living like this?”

“Eh? Living together with Yuu-kun, is like a dream?”

I’ve noticed it since we were kids.

Her feelings.

We’ve been close for so long. There’s no way I didn’t notice.

...Even I, just a little bit...

“But Arina,... is it okay if Mist...?”

I have to make it clear at some point.

I have a ‘responsibility’, both for Arina and Mist.

She always masked it by making lewd talk, but she must be feeling some discomfort, living in the same room as the target of her affections.

“But Yuu-kun. You love Mist-chan, right?”

But mist calmly said so.

...that’s right.

I’ve been terribly indecisive, even to Mist who was directing her feelings at me...

I know I was the worst, as a man.

“No. We’re talking about you now... You know I noticed, right?”

Then the air around Arina changed slightly.

“— I see. Okay, I get it”

She raised her hanging head and wore a slightly passionate smile.

Her face was dyed pink.

It was unnerving. I’ve never seen Arina like this before.

“Then, Arina will confess, okay”

Her smile widened to her whole face.

“I love you, Yuu-kun. I’ve been looking at you since long long long ago”

“O... okay”

I honestly thought she was cute, somewhat frustrating.

How should I put it, it was embarrassing to be told straight.

Arina staggered close to me and took my hands.

She dearly gripped them and continued her confession.

“I love you, Yuu-kun. I’m sorry, Arina fell so helplessly in love with you like this. But, I just can’t stop my feelings”

“Don’t blame yourself”

“— You see, It’s not like Arina wants Yuu-kun to respond. If Yuu-kun loves Mist-chan, if Yuu-kun loves Princess Rosé, Yuu-kun can choose. Arina will still love Yuu-kun. Arina loves you. Arina won’t stop —”

“I said, don’t put it like that...”

“— Of course, Arina will be really happy if you chose Arina. But you see, Arina won’t be selfish. You don’t have to choose Arina. Arina will still love you. Arina won’t stop —”

“... A, Arina?”

Arina is acting weird.

She was still smiling as she made her confession, but her eye focus kept shifting. It's like, rather than looking at me, she was looking *through* me.

“BecauseYuuKunIsSoWonderfulAndCoolAndYourEveryCellAndEveryBreathYouTake FillsArina’sBodyAndJustBeingByYuuKun’sSideMakesArinaHappyAndBecause PrincessRoséAndMistChanAreAlsoYuuKun’sTypeOfGirlsSoTheyCanTakeArina’sPlace AndBothCanBeHappySoI’mSureEveryGirlThatComesToLoveYuuKunAfterwardsWill ScrambleForYuuKunAllTheSameButEvenSoIt’sFineIfYuuKunChoosesOneOrIfYuuKun ChoosesEveryoneBecauseIt’sWhatArina’sYuuKunDecides—”

“Hey, Arina”

Arina’s mumbling something, what is she saying?

It became incoherent along the way, I couldn’t catch it.

Unlike her earlier pink-blushed face, Arina said with an eerie, ecstatic look.

She then unthinkingly caressed my hands.

“Um... can you let go?”

“— but you know, Yuu-kun?”

grip, Arina gripped my wrists tight.

“Arina loves Yuu-kun more than *aaaaanyone*”

Her grip became stronger and stronger.

“A,... Arina!!”

It hurts. Pain ran through my wrists.

“It can’t compare to Rosé’s or Mists. Arina is number one. Arina won’t lose to anyone”

It felt like she was constricting with all her strength!

Just how strong is she!!

“Arina, hey! It hurts!!”

“Rosé is the prettiest, Mist is the cutest. But Arina loves you the most. That’s right. Ufu, ufufufu, that’s right —♪”

“I’M RIGHT AREN’T I!?”

“Ghhhh!!”

I think... I heard something break...!!

I felt a jolt through my wrists, then lost the feeling on my fingers.

Unable to bear it, I fell down, and Arina came to herself.

“Y... Yuu-kun!? Ah, AAAAAHHH!! Ah —!? Arina, what did...!!”

She leaned over and chanted healing magic right away.

“I’m sorry I’m sorry!! Arina didn’t mean to!! Arina was too overjoyed telling Yuu-kun Arina’s feelings...!!”

“.....”

She always easily feels guilty since way back, so I suppose she must have been burdened by it ¹

...But I didn’t think it would be that much...

“A, Arina, doesn’t mind sharing with Mist-chan! S, so, just being allowed to be near Yuu-kun, is enough...!!”

Arina said with a tearful face. I gave her a pat on the head.

Chapter 56

Despair Princess

“...so what am I supposed to do here...”

Transformed into Lady Demy, Princess weakly sighed.

She was in a cathedral in the noble district.

It was past dinnertime, late at night when everyone had fallen asleep. Moonlight filtered in through the solemn mosaic windows. That faint light was the only thing illuminating her steps in the unlit dome. There were many public establishments in the noble district, libraries, theaters, and art galleries. This cathedral, spreading the teachings of the Born Light, was one of those establishments. Unlike other buildings, it was located in the outskirts of the noble district, not a few commoner visitors came seeking salvation and peace.

With the altar in her eyes, Lady Demy took one of the almost a hundred pews, sitting alone in one of them. The dome, capable of holding every citizen during special events, was wrapped in silence; it was rather chilly.

Lady Demy's weary sighs echoed throughout the Dome again. Knowing Maar's incident, she had done all she could as the Princess to fight her own falsified seal. However, it all ended in vain only because it would cause trouble for a great many people. Receiving a direct remonstrance from her father had been the final straw.

[Please believe in Her Highness the Princess one more time. She will not abandon you]

“So much for that...”

She hung her head. This was her limit.

Born as Royalty, she never intended to live in peace like everyone thought. But that is,

after all, no more than her symbolic power as the ‘princess’, the moment she spoke out in government her powerlessness was laid bare. The feeling of loss from the near total defeat felt like worms eating her body.

— Frustrating. I hate myself for being unable to do anything.

Whenever she felt the need to hang onto something, she would always come to this cathedral and pray.

With her faith to the heavens as fuel, she would seek guidance and find a way forward. By offering her prayers, the future will be bright. That was what she believed.

But now, that wasn’t the case. Rosé came, but what she sought right now wasn’t the god looking down from the heavens.

“...Yuuki-san...”

She whispered, raising her face at the ceiling.

“Would I trouble you if I came to see you”

The one she was seeking help from was the one she fell in love with.

Even if that was a false, warped, artificially implanted love.

That didn’t matter. She loved Yuuki.

Although she felt uneasy, since it’s Yuuki, she felt she would be ‘forgiver’ if she fell in love with him. Luckily, Yuuki was a good person.

A man that would rise in anger at injustice.

Even if she was selfish and said too much, he would only make a troubled face and accept it.

A pure and innocent Princess would surely not be able to experience these passionate emotions.

...compared to him, Glenn and the other noble boys were just the same as trash in her mind...

So no matter how it began, she did not think it was a mistake to be charmed by him.

It was no longer important to Rosé whether or not these feelings were fake or not.

“...Right. I shouldn’t show my unsightly side to Yuuki-san”

I have pride as a princess. I’m a royal. One who reigns

Revered as a saint, I have to use that and continue to be someone who gives hope

I have to show that, I have to show the best ‘me’ to Yuuki-san

The next time I see Yuuki, the next time I make him spoil me, this matter will have to have been settled

Demy willed herself and stood up.

— *crreek*

The grand cathedral doors opened.

There was a visitor other than herself this late at night.

She thought it strange, and sent her gaze there.

A petite girl in civilian clothes walked straight at her.

Demy was surprised.

It was Maar. What coincidence.

She was carrying a large bouquet and turned to her.

It was plucked from wild flowers, the assortment of flowers were a mess, unlike purchased ones.

She also saw Demy and bowed deeply.

“Good evening. Such a coincidence, isn’t it”

She called out to her, but said no more and made another bow.

She looked lifeless. There wasn’t a speck of excitement or emotion at suddenly meeting someone she knew. She didn’t seem at all like the living girl lavishing smiles the noon before.

...did something happen? I have a bad feeling about this

Maar headed for the altar, laid the flowers there, and said a short prayer.

“This late at night, did something happen?”

Asked the question, Maar answered in a toneless voice.

“— they found mother’s body”

“..”

She swallowed her breath.

The mother that was thought to have run away after becoming the wealthy merchant’s apprentice.

“She was washed away in a river outside town. The body was so waterlogged they couldn’t identify her, but they found me from the missing person’s items”

A drowned body will quickly lose its living form.

It was only luck amid misfortune that her mother could be identified.

“I pray for her happiness in the next world”

She was pressed with unreasonable debt, lost everything, and right after she saw hope in Princess Rosé, her dear mother was found dead. Such an unfortunate child.

...I knew I’m not the one who could save this girl!

“This matter weighs heavily on Princess Rosé. She will surely lend a helping hand. Please endure for a little more”

“.....”

Maar fell silent for a while, then said.

“...Princess, will she come and save us?”

“Yes, I’m sure of it”

“When mother was alive, she used to say this a lot. ‘become a pure girl, like Princess Rosé’”

With a dark, gloomy voice, Maar continued.

“She probably doesn’t think that anymore”

“....., eh?”

What... was that?

“Why didn’t Princes notice the fake seal sooner? Where was she, what was she doing when our house was taken away? Was it so hard to use royal authority to call back the fake seal? But in any case... mother... isn’t coming back”

Why? How did it come to this?

Is she saying I – Rosé killed her mother?

“It’s my turn to be the merchant apprentice now. I have to pay back the debt, after all... please pray for me so I don’t end up in a river like mother did”

Maar left her behind. She heard the cathedral door shut.

Demy... Rosé fell down hard on the cold floor.

Why is she blaming me?

I said the seal was a fake, right?

Why won’t she understand?

I... I worked hard...

I’ve done everything that I could!

[Princess doesn’t understand how we are living]

“That’s — That is right, but — !!”

Having somehow fought back the urge to scream, Rosé put her hand on the floor.

Large teardrops dropped onto the marble and spread out.

I don’t even know what’s right anymore

The people that respect her, but would change their tune as soon as they met with

misfortune.

The bureaucrats' indifference and alienation. Her father, who won't listen to her.
And most of all, herself, who couldn't do anything but run around in circles.
The words that she desperately held back came out.

"...no more..."

If this is the way it is

I shouldn't have been born a royal

If I weren't a princess I would never have been engaged to Glenn, I wouldn't have been manipulated by a bug. People wouldn't praise me on their own, they wouldn't have put me on a pedestal and push me off

Ah. Aaah. I can't take this anymore. Rosé felt something inside her crumble down.
Aaaah. No more. Enough. The powerlessness was suffocating her.

I, I've had enough...

She couldn't even stand up on her own...

"Princess Rosé"

— there was a man who called out to her.

It was Yuuki. Yuuki came for her.

Yuuki came for her, who couldn't stand from all the hopelessness.

He gently supported Rosé and said

"It must've been tough. You've worked hard"

He comforted her with sweet words.

"...Yuuki-san..."

Ah, so amazing, Yuuki-san

He comes running to me when I'm suffering

Rosé's heart was filled with bliss.

"Rosé, I've come for you. Let's run away"

“— Run?”

“Yes. Quit being a princess, and come with me to my world. Be a normal girl in my world — and live as Demy just for me”

It was such a baffling temptation.

Just my Demy. What a wonderful sound.

Rosé’s answer was obvious.

“Yes. I’ll go. I’ve had enough of this world. Please take me and go!”

“Yes, let’s go. Right now”

Then Yuuki stretched his hand to Rosé’s neck.

“Eh... *guh!*?”

Yuuki was strangling Rosé’s neck, smiling.

“Yuu... ki... *san?*”

She desperately raised her hand, trying to resist, but the strength of a man is too different.

All Rosé can do was groan and squirm.

“It’ll be fine, Rosé. Don’t worry. We’re only going to to a world just for the two of us. I’ll come for you right away”

“— why... like this...”

“There’s no other way. This is the only way. You know it too, right?”

“This is the only way we can run away from Arina”

“——!?”

So Yuuki finally noticed his childhood friend’s madness

There’s no way to reach Arina’s power. Death is the only way to escape it

And Yuuki chose Rosé to accompany him

“— all right”

I don’t mind, I’m done with this horrible world

If I'm to die by Yuuki's hand, there would be no greater happiness

"If that's what you want..."

Rosé stopped struggling and surrendered her body to Yuuki's killing intent.

She crumbled down, he stood up.

Her consciousness was dimming, like it was her bridal night. Rosé smiled.

"Now what might you be doing?"

"" — !? ""

Just before it was all over.

Inside the cathedral, love and hate embodied itself.

The pews were blown away. The building swayed.

"Huhu. Say, Yuu-kun"

chink, chink, each step she took made a metallic sound.

She was holding a pointed, crooked, long rod-shaped thing.

"Yuu-kun, Yuu-kun, Arina's Yuu-kun♪ Where did you leave Arina and go~?"

It was just a little bit more, but *she* came along.

Chapter 57

Eternal Escape

The sound of metal hitting marble echoed within the cathedral with pews scattered about.

While swinging her rod, she swayed as she walked up to them.

“A, A, Ari... na”

Seeing her, Yuuki paled.

“Arina, what are you doing here?”

“Huhu. You know, Arina lo—ves Yuu-kun. So of course Arina knows where Yuu-kun is going?”

Just a little more, and they could escape forever.

And yet, this woman won't even allow death?

“I, I see... Arina is amazing, huh”

Yuuki flusteredly stood up and tried to smooth things over.

“I'll be fine, so why don't we go back, Arina?”

He calmly said so.

That moment, something caught fire in Rosé's heart.

“No”

“Hah?”

Something surged up in Rosé's heart.

She's going to take Yuuki away. She was going to take Yuuki, who had resolved to a double suicide with me. Yuuki said I can run away. He said he was going to kill me. Yuuki

is going to leave me. He's going to go back with Arina. He's going to leave me alive. Yuuki is going to leave. He's not going to be by my side —

“I don't want any of that!!”

Rosé jumped at Yuuki.

Yuuki tumbled down from the force, hitting the back of his head. But Rosé was in a daze and had no mind to spare to notice. She called to Yuuki, riding him like a horse.

“Don't leave me behind, Yuuki-san! Die with me properly!! You said you wanted to die with me, right!!”

“W, wait Rosé... Arina's here...”

“I don't give a damn about Arina!!”

Rosé looked around. She couldn't do it with a girl's strength.

She needed something convenient, preferably sharp.

She took a piece of broken wood near her hand.

It used to be part of the broken pews. It was cut in a diagonal, like a stake.

This should do the trick!

“Stop, Rosé, what do you think you're doing!?”

“It'll be alright! I'll kill you before that woman does!! Since that's what Yuuki wants!!”

It's so painful to kill my beloved Yuuki with my own hands it makes me shiver, but if that's what he wants I will grant it for him. It's only a matter of in which order we go, me first or him first

In fact, I think it's right for me to bear this sin in Yuuki's place

“Eek, n, no way, Rosé...”

He was frightened, he shivered. One does not simply overcome the fear of death. It was the same for Rosé as well.

Tears fell from his eyes from the desperation. Grief traced along his face.

But their emotions were no more than an obstacle to overcome on the way to the

world just for the two of them. What they need right now isn't fear or grief, but the burning passion to overcome everything. So Rosé sweetly, gently whispered to her lover.

"I'm sorry. It must be scary. It might even hurt. But it'll be fine. You won't feel a thing soon. I love you Yuuki-san. Thank you for choosing me. Soon we'll have sweet time with just the two of us like before"

Rosé raised the stake and —

"H... help..."

"....."

"Please... help..."

"....."

With both hands, he made to resist, pleading for help, Rosé stopped.

"Who... are you?"

This isn't Yuuki

Yuuki would never have showed such a pathetic side

Yuuki would have accepted once he decided to die together with me

Yuuki would never have rejected Rosé like this...!

This is an insect that's not Yuuki!!

SLAM!!

Rosé stabbed the stake to his chest with both hands.

Blood flowed from fake Yuuki's mouth. More than enough to fill a water glass.

A drop of the dirty blood splattered and stained Rosé.

tch, she clicked her tongue. She then said to Arina.

"Let me borrow that, please"

Having received the metal rod from Arina, Rosé stabbed it onto the crown of fake Yuuki's head.

Something dark red splattered onto the marble floor, his face transformed and his eyes bulged out like a fish.

Rosé asked Arina, unimpressed.

“What is this... ‘thing’?”

Chapter 58

Knock-off Love, Defective Affection

I should've noticed this Yuuki is fake sooner

To begin with, there's no way Arina who could move with godlike speed would silently watch as this kind of thing happens

Having calmed down, Rosé kicked the fake in annoyance.

“There was a fake of Marquis Isky too, right? This is probably the same thing... except that this one looks like it was made in a hurry, it's a deadbeat compared to that one”

Explained Arina with a smile. Then, she told her off like it was something funny.

“And you sure can talk about being in love with Yuu-kun, being so easily fooled by something like this”

The moment Rosé heard that, she struck Arina with the rod she was holding with all her strength.

Her body moved on its own when she heard the horrible insult.

Arina stopped it with one hand as if it were nothing.

It made a *shiing* sound like metal striking against metal.

“A lot happened, I was tired”

It felt like an excuse even to herself, but Rosé had fallen sick ¹. When she had went into denial of herself, Yuuki suddenly appeared and her eyes became clouded with joy. Otherwise, she would never have mistaken the fake for Yuuki.

“Hmph, sure. A similar one came to Arina, but a fake isn't going to make me passionate like you were. Hm, but you can't help it, can you. You're not on the same level as Arina who knows Yuu-kun the best. Ahahaha♪”

She struck her with the rod once again. This time at her head. The metal bent.

Damn monster... she can still laugh even when hit right on the top of the head. So irritating.

“Did you come here to make fun of me?”

“Not at all. Arina came to help, you know. Arina’s going to be troubled if a fake stole Yuu-kun’s Princess Rosé. Though, since it turned into something funny Arina ended up watching quietly... ah, I know”

Arina snapped her finger, then pierced it through the cathedral floor. Several arms came out.

In the blink of an eye, the arms restrained Rosé’s body. One of them was holding her head like it was going to pluck it.

“Since you look like you’re getting too carried away, Arina will tell you this. Your feelings are an imitation Arina ‘planted’ in you. Arina is only letting you take Arina’s place. It will never compare to Arina’s real thing. You understand, don’t you—? ♪”

“So what about it! Ugh—!!”

Her words stopped in mid-track. She clearly felt Arina’s killing intent in her hazy vision.

“Arina’s saying, the mere knock-off should never again think about double suicides with Yuu-kun. What are you, an idiot? Do you understand? Smart Rosé understands, right?”

“——”

Rosé did not nod her head.

He only happened to be a fake today.

She believed, if Yuuki really wanted it, what she did was not wrong.

“Say it... ‘yes I understand’”

“No”

Arina’s disgust was plain on her face. She’s already irritated at Rosé stubbornness.

“Listen to Arina, knock-off. I can turn you into a meat doll that can’t think about anything but Yuuki you know?”

“Sure. Do what you like”

She hadn't gone so bad as to back down with just that.

Furthermore, even if that were what she became, she doesn't mind if she could think of Yuuki.

— however.

"Ah, I know. In that case Arina will erase your feelings for Yuu-kun"

"—!?"

Her body suddenly filled with dread.

"Arina feels bad for Yuu-kun, but Arina can't let a toy that won't listen to what she's told near him. Arina must consider Yuu-kun's safety, so Arina needs to have Rosé leave the stage."

"H, hold on! You planted this on your own didn't you!? Then to take it away after all this....!!"

"Don't worry. Arina will explain to Yuu-kun. See ya, bye-bye. Thank you for your service"

Blood drained from her body. She felt pain running on the back of her head.

To lose her feelings for Yuuki, that was the most unbearable thing for Rosé.

For Rosé, he was right now the last thing supporting her heart in the maelstrom of her life.

"No, stop, please! I'm begging you! I won't do anything selfish anymore! Anything but that!!"

"My my, how desperate. It's not like Arina's taking your life you know"

"This is more important than my life!! You know that!!"

Arina made an evil smile.

"So will the good girl Rosé listen to Arina properly and give Yuu-kun loots of love as Arina's knock-off?"

Her attitude was as if she were telling of a little girl.

Rosé had no choice but to accept.

"...I'll listen to you. Please, forgive me"

After she unwillingly said so, the grotesque arms returned to the ground.

Released, Rosé fell down on her backside.

...she's been ground to dust today. After realizing just how powerless she was as a Princess, the lover that came for her was a fake. Then to top it off, she realized the monster of a love rival was holding her feelings that was her last pillar like a dog's leash.

Rosé sighed. Too tired to feel grief.

Arina came over to her, smiling. She offered her a hand.

She hesitated to take the homicidal demon's hand a little, but she probably wouldn't do anything more than this.

Rosé quietly accepted her help to stand.

"Arina is in a good mood today, so Arina didn't end up doing anything too terrible to you"

"You sure can talk about yourself. And you did do something quite terrible to me"

"You know, just now, Arina properly confessed to Yuu-kun. Yuu-kun knows now, even though Arina decided to not say... Yuu-kun said, *say it properly*. Ehehee"

Kyah, Arina made a cute shriek.

"Arina feels embarrassed just remembering it♪"

Rosé did not want to hear such an irritating story, but Arina just kept on going and going.

Strangely, when she's like this, Arina seemed like a normal girl in love just like Mist and the other girls.

— in that case, it was a little strange.

"I've been wondering for a while. You can control people's minds, right? Wouldn't it be easy for you to make Yuuki yours?"

"Arina? Do that to Yuu-kun? What for?"

"Don't you want Yuuki to look at you?"

"—... Weeel, it would make Arina happy like nothing else if Yuu-kun would love Arina

like that, but, Arina won't do something so insulting to Yuu-kun"

Which means, she wouldn't hurt or endanger Yuuki in any way or form.

But nevertheless, for someone who was in love with Yuuki this much, it's a wonder that she didn't show any sign of possessiveness or envy like Mist and Rosé did. She could have kept him for herself, and yet on the contrary, she even implanted a love for Yuuki in Rosé, increasing the number of rivals she had.

If she wanted to, she could have made Rosé into an inhuman bundle of loyalty like Glenn did, but at most, she only added a bit so that she matched Yuuki's disposition.

"If you wanted to manipulate me, then why did you keep me human? It would've been quicker to make a puppet of me rather than making me fall for Yuuki"

Then Arina's smile vanished.

Rosé was shocked. In an instant, Arina's face turned sad.

"...It's impossible for Arina. Arina's puppet can't do anything more than Arina can.

There are too many things Arina can't give Yuu-kun"

For the first time, the demon that always sneers at humans showed a human side.

Rosé finally understood.

She didn't feel she had the charms of a woman.

Even with her godlike powers, even with the power to cross time.

"Arina couldn't become the kind of woman Yuu-kun wants. Arina is broken. The reason Yuu-kun always watches over Arina is in the end as a 'guardian'. Even if Arina had the hairstyle Yuu-kun likes, even if Arina had a body Yuu-kun likes, even if Arina learned to act like Yuu-kun wants. Yuu-kun would have no need of a changed Arina"

Arina had already realized that that thickheaded boy had no awareness of it.

It was the only thing Arina fundamentally couldn't have, self confidence as a woman.

And she was bound by the fetters of a 'childhood friend', making her unable to move.

She came to the conclusion that she could never satisfy her beloved by herself.

Therefore she used other women to compensate for it.

...Though indeed, the fact that her own greed had manifested warped, as a desire to

give Yuuki everything, also had something to do with it...

Arina cast her head down for a while, then said

“Forget about that just now. If you tell Yuu-kun I’ll kill you”

She then turned her back.

...There wasn’t any room for sympathy, but Rosé found her a little pitiable.

As she tried to say something to her, the air around Arina changed.

“Princess Rosé, hold this”

She threw her something.

The Magic item Yuuki had with him... if she remembered correctly, it was called an E:ID phone.

“And this is?”

“You’ve seen how to use it, right? It can do less than Yuu-kun’s, but I’m going to be a little busy so you should defend yourself on your own”

Black shadows crept along the chapel walls.

Several of them.

“A guest, I wonder?”

“Something like that”

[Ready]

Arina and Rosé readied their swords.

Standing with their backs against each other.

Chapter 59

Arina and Rosé's Joint Struggle

Several more “shadows” appeared on the chapel walls, gradually forming heads, shoulders, four limbs... turning into a human shape almost like a doll.

Then the shadows became gradually more and more defined.

...more of the “fake Yuuki”

But this time, they had no faces, the place where they should've had eyes and noses and mouths were flat as if they were wearing featureless masks, though from their attire, physique, and hairstyle they were obviously imitating Yuuki.

They're increasingly becoming more and more “badly done”

— Still, those things were enough to get on Rosé's nerves.

There were several of those things in the chapel under the light of the moon.

They swayed and staggered, then simultaneously jumped to attack.

Arina produced grotesque arms from the ground and intercepted the enemy.

Once, twice, the arms flailed, striking the fake Yuukis in the air.

Out of self-interest, seeing this annoying girl as an ally made her seem reliable.

But the enemy's numbers kept on increasing, rushing onto them one after the other.

Finally, one of them fell upon Rosé.

Rosé had calmed down and readied her sword. She pulled her arm back and imagined an arrow being loosed from a bow.

“YAAAAAH!!”

Like that, she thrust her blade straight at the enemy.

Attacking just like how her lessons taught her was enough to make the enemy falter, Arina followed up after her. However, each and every one of the enemy was persistent, just when she thought one was down they would get up again. Somehow, they were hard to bring down.

Arina attacked, and Rosé continued after, defending her blind spot.

But the enemy numbered over twenty.

“This isn’t going well”

Arina muttered a complaint.

Concentrating on manipulating the arms, she bent down and put her hands on the floor.

Seeing her defenseless state, Rosé had a thought.

Right now, I might be able to stab her in the back and kill her

If she did then this girl will no longer be able to take away her love for Yuuki.

She could peacefully be in love with him.

Stabbing through the back of the girl in front of her eyes, like an attack pouring down on the enemy, twisting her. Such a vision appeared in her mind, The wicked thought caused desire to run around inside her. One stab through the back isn’t enough. She could stab through the spine, too. She won’t die from just that anyhow. To rain down violent attacks when she flinched. Imagining Arina frightened in a sea of blood, begging for mercy made her feel refreshed. Once she had declared she won’t come close to Yuuki ever again, she would land the finishing blow in the name of Rosé Vosne-Romanée Grand Cru Ivan. There were plenty of charges against her. This is delivery of justice. Huhu♪

That’s right. I will be releasing Yuuki from this monster.

Thinking that, her cheeks became looser.

The Rosé who was playing the saint a few days before would never think of something like this.

But now that she had overcome various difficulties, she could do it.

Rosé raised her sword in her sadistic madness, and was right about to execute the plan. — but, hold on.

She thought, if she did that then she would have to face the cavalry on her own, and stopped. Also, just by killing Arina will cause Yuuki to be deeply saddened.

Rosé clicked her tongue. *This won't do.*

— First she must somehow destroy the relationship between the two somehow.

At any rate, she should for now take note that even the seemingly invincible Arina couldn't handle too large numbers. This was not the time, but let's continue on and find out her weak points.

"Hold on Rosé. We're short on literal hands here"

While it's unclear whether or not she noticed Rosé's plan, Arina asked for help.

"I'm only going to be holding you back, you know"

"Not necessarily. Yell into the E:ID phone. Say the skill name, 'Dancing Chainsaw'"

Light suddenly appeared from the E:ID.

It covered Rosé's body as if caressing her, and finally transformed the sword she was holding.

A hilt made up of a box-shaped machine. Two rod-shaped handles, one handle pointing straight at Rosé and a grip laid horizontally. They seem to be meant for holding in either hand. The body-length blade was furnished with a row of countless small fang-like bladelets from the base, the ridge, to the tip, and then back the other ridge to the other base. It looked like the saws carpenters use.

But it strangely seemed used. It looked like it had been splashed with liquid, seemingly having rust and stains on the entire blade. As a weapon, it looked like it should've been maintained better...

When Rosé noticed, she was already wearing an apron over her dress.

It was a black, lustrous apron made out of boiled leather.

"Um... what is this?"

"What else? It's a chainsaw"

Just saying the name won't tell me anything

To the bewildered Rosé, Arina said.

“Have you seen Tobe Hooper’s ‘The Texas Chainsaw Massacre’?”

What’s with the ominous name? Is it a painting or a play or something?

“No, I haven’t,” answered Rosé. Arina then flashed her a grin.

“Let’s watch it together next time. It’s a wonderful show”

BRRRRRRRRRRRRMMMMMMM!!!

Suddenly, Rosé’s weapon made a groaning noise.

By magic or some other power, the small bladelets began moving, running around the blade at high speed, so powerful it seemed like it would cut even its wielder. Holding the grip that felt like it was going to pop her shoulder off, Rosé attacked.

“KYAAAAAAHHH!!”

Rosé raised a shrill scream, but was unable to let go of the cursed weapon.

Rather, if she unhand the thing right now, her body will be torn to shreds!

The frail girl was unable to control the weapon’s movements, and she was inevitably dragged around tottering by it. It was like she was riding on a runaway horse.

If she didn’t pay attention, she might cut her leg.

“What the hell is this!! Make it stop, please make it stop!!”

It was all she could to control her weapon, but she was in the middle of a fight.

The enemy rushed in, aiming at Rosé.

“NOOO! DON’T COME NOW!!”

The chainsaw immediately turned their way and stuck into the enemy’s gut. The countless bladelets relentlessly churned its innards, and with a wet, sploshing, squelching sound, spurts of blood and meaty bits soaked Rosé’s apron. The enemy spasmed violently, but finally its upper body was split from its lower.

She thought she was somewhat used to viscerally uncomfortable scenes, but this was too much.

And she did it with her own hands! Rosé felt her heart constrict.

Played by the murder instrument, Rosé stepped to look for the next enemy against her

will.

The sound of Rosé's screaming and the enemy's meat being stirred filled the room.

"Looks like you're getting used to the dance"

Arina had moved to a safe place at some point, roaring with laughter seeing Rosé repeated her murders while being played around by the machine. Rosé felt her anger rise.

I knew I should've killed her!

Chapter 60

Like the Chicken that Day

Overhead above the spreading sight of Rosé and the machine blade massacring their enemies.

There was a shadow leaning on the cross of the cathedral, peeking at the situation inside.

“Say, me. It turned out to be something incredible.”

“Yes, I’m surprised too”

Patting her own silver hair shining under the moonlight, she talked to herself.

Chaser. The young girl who watched Arina’s group at the Isky residence.

Unlike her maid-clothed look back at the Isky residence, she was now wearing commoner clothes.

“Look. I said so didn’t I?

The Dry County of Yuuki was going to be useless because it was half-baked.

But I can’t get close to Yuuki. There’s Arina, and Rosé, and Mist.

Arina’s scary, isn’t she. No Rosé’s scarier.

Eh? I’m pretty sure Arina’s scarier.

But how did the Dry Counties get so easily...”

“—!!”

As she had her attention on the situation below, Chaser’s face grimaced noticing the sudden danger.

Wings of shadow grew out of her back and struck back the incoming knife.

“That chainsaw, it’s a weapon I borrowed from the god of my world”

Another young girl floated down onto the roof.

It was Arina.

Leaving Rosé to rampage, she used the chance to come and see the situation over here.
“Since you’ve done so much, I thought I should come see what kind of person you are.
Turns out that a gloomy girl talking to herself is the criminal?”
Arina looked down on her.

“Disgusting”

She snorted.

Chaser’s eyebrow twitched.

“You were sneering at me just now...!”

The jet black wings expanded and swooped onto Arina like a sword.

“Don’t make fun of the one I love!”

“I, kind of don’t get what you’re on about”

Arina easily dodged it, but Chaser’s face looked angry as if she did not expect it.

“Damn you... don’t dodge!! — wait!!”

Chaser was about to launch the next strike, but was stopped by her own left hand.

“Let’s calm down. If we finished off Arina now, our dream won’t come true.

But, but, she made fun of me... she’s making fun of me for being together with me!”

“Yes, I’m angry too, but, let’s endure it for now. Nobody understands how I am, I know that, right?”

“Hmm,” Arina observed her trying to persuade herself.

“I do know of a young lady split personality in old Europe, but... this is a little different, it seems”

“Because I’m me and nobody else”

“Well, doesn’t matter”

Arina shrugged her shoulders.

Then she said while looking with eyes that froze anyone who saw her.

“You will pay for doing something so foolish as making a fake of Yuu-kun. — and if you love yourself so much then go inside the same tomb together!!”

Purple sparks erupted from Arina's fist, rushing onto Chaser's body.

Chaser flew into the sky, barely dodging them.

"I'm not a match for Arina. I understand...!"

"Like I'll let you run you two-mouthed woman!!... kya!?"

Arina jumped up to pursue her, but shrieked from a surprise attack.

Someone was coiled up around her leg.

"You, let go...!!"

Arina delivered a punch to their face, but they let out a "gya" sound like a chicken and released her leg. Chaser used the chance to run to the skies.

Judging that she's out of her grasp with a glance, Arina clicked her tongue and guarded against the new enemy.

"I don't want you to go, Arina..."

Dripping blood from their nose, the new enemy slowly stood up.

Looking at them, Arina's eyes widened.

"Umm—. You're '*senpai*', aren't you?"

She was the girl who took care of Arina as the *senpai* when she was acting as a maid in the Isky residence.

Also the victim who instructed Arina to finish off the chicken and lost consciousness from the way she did it.

"My name is Treyte. Please remember"

Arina became more and more bewildered by the entrance of the unexpected person, but this wasn't the time to be.

"I'd love to have a touching reunion with you, but I'm busy... If you get in my way any more you will pay with your life"

"Don't wanna, don't leave me behind!"

Treyte seemed like she had finally lost it, she was hot on Arina's heels.

With cold eyes, Arina said

“I warned you”

Her upper half was cut with a shining sword and was tossed into the sky.

Fresh blood danced in the moonlight.

“Sheesh,” said Arina in annoyance.

Then she immediately changed her attention and was about to go after Chaser when...

“— wonderful”

She stopped in her tracks.

She turned around and saw a different ‘Treyte’ than the one she just tossed away standing there.

She had both hands over her cheeks, looking somehow enraptured.

“Blood soaked Arina, Arina who throws away my life with cold eyes. Under the light of the moon, so so beautiful —. Now, do me next... guhh!!”

A grotesque hand gouged Treyte’s torso.

Treyte died.

However,

“Uhuhuhu, Arina is really wonderful”

“She kills me with such ease”

“Like that chicken”

“But I think I want to be killed directly this time”

“Killer Arina, I’m addicted by your beauty...” ¹

The Treytes that crawled out of the woodwork swarmed around Arina. They then praised Arina’s killing them with faces of ecstasy, pestering her to kill them next.

Of course, even Arina was a little startled by that display.

“So you’re the so-called Dry Counties, are you”

As she said that, one of the Treytes nodded.

That's right. This way, even if it's over once I'm killed, I can still see Arina who killed me even after being killed lots and looooooots of times"



✂ Several hours beforehand.

After the incident at the Isky residence, Treyte who had been working there resigned along with the leaving of the other maids. The reason was because the fear of Arina would come back and even render her immobile from time to time.

Since she had no relatives, she started by looking for a job at the castle town.

Soon afterwards, she found a live-in job as a warehouseman's assistant.

However, it turned out to be the hideout of the gangsters, Dob Locke brothers' hideout.

Without knowing that, Treyte was rudely welcomed by them.

Though she wasn't on the receiving end of direct violence because of the employment contract, the job of a servant was harsh. Cleaning up after their scraps, picking up the trash lain all over the place, and preparing their food, all while being showered by verbal sexual harrassment.

If I knew it was going to be like this I should've quietly stayed at the Isky house

...no, she couldn't stay there anymore.

She wasn't confident she could still have the will to live under the constant torment of the nightmares.

Arina. Chicken-tearing Arina. Blood-bathed Arina. If-you-don't-do-what-I-say-you'll-be-next Arina. Arina who'll tear my head off like the chicken. Arina who'll lift up my head and laugh. Arina, Arina, ARINA...

“Oi, what’s wrong”

The voice of a gang member calling her out startled her.

Preoccupied with trauma, she had inadvertently stopped moving.

Sweat ran along her forehead. The face of Arina smiling while drenched in blood won’t disappear.

“Yer lookin horrible there. Who the hell drugged the girl!”

“Naw, is she preggers? Oi I told you not to r×pe her!”

“Idiot, she’s not a frog. She can’t get knocked up so fast!”

The men laughed as they talked insensitively.

— *knock knock.*

“Oh?”

They had a visitor. Wiping her face, she moved to do her job as the servant.

“No, stay back”

One of them ordered her to the back room.

She didn’t really understand, but Treyte was probably in no shape to be dealing with visitors.

Taking that explanation, she went to the back room.

She heard the death screams right away.

What the girl saw when she turned back was a man’s head being knocked against the ceiling.

“N... no way...”

This isn’t possible, *she* shouldn’t be here.

Persuading herself, Treyte closed the door and watched from a crack between the boards.

The nightmare was swinging a longsword around, causing chaos.

[Now, it's time for garbage disposal. I've prepared lots of trash bags so you can all die with peace of mind♪]

Arina said that and twisted a rushing man, killing him.

She caught a fleeing man, killing him.

Just the same as the chicken that day, Arina repeatedly killed the men without a shred of regret, in fact, she seemed to rather enjoy the job.

Treyte suppressed a fearful scream, watching the scene as she kept herself from being seen...

“— beautiful —”

She muttered, then she noticed it. While on the one hand Treyte was tortured by fear, she was on the other hand violently fascinated by that fear; the shock of the unknown, and the strange expectation of danger.

Arina who was killing and killing the brawny men was beautiful.

She was bewitching, the way she artfully swung the sword. Such a dangerous cuteness. Her fear toward Arina didn't disappear, it was in fact the other way around. Her fear swelled like a snowball. As a flip side to her thoughts, dulled from being engulfed in fear, Treyte was clearly aroused.

Her cheeks flushed. Her breathing became ragged. Her forehead was drenched in sweat.

Kill more. Arina, show me more blood, muttered Treyte. She watched from the crack as if enraptured, taking in the scene like an onlooker happening upon the scene of a sex crime.

“If I went out now, I, I'll also... Haah, haah... Ehehehe. I, I wonder if she'll put me in with

them...?"

Her heart sprung up imagining that. Drool dripped out of her sloppily open mouth. She wiped it with her sleeves.

The end of her life will become Arina's work of art.

Ah, but it was no use. She was scared. She was afraid to end it like that.

Sighing at her own cowardliness, Treyte watched Arina's show until it was over.



"After that Chaser appeared and collected the gangster body bags Arina threw away. Dry County material, she says"

One of the Treytes triumphantly recited the story with passionate eyes on Arina.

"I jumped at it right away ..."

"Because there can be this many of me!"

"Because I can have Arina kill me again and again"

"Say, isn't this enough talk?"

"I, I can't hold back anymore... hurry and kill me next!"

"Like the chicken that day"

"Like the chicken that day"

"Like the chicken that day"

"Like the chicken that day"

The maddened Treytes pointed their knives at Arina. They took a breath and said.

"" If you wanted a reason to kill me ""

"" Then I'll give you plenty!!! ""

"...ugh..."

Faced with the mass off... no the *one* crazed fan of hers, Arina was rattled.

"She's, a little, scary..."

How ironic.

The Treytes that craved the fear of Arina scared her more than anyone else.

Chapter 61

Rising Flames

The enemy came. She swung the self-moving blade. Vibrations. Sound of churning entrails. The enemy came. She thrust the self-moving blade. Vibrations. Sound of the enemy being severed. The enemy jumped. She stabbed the self-moving blade. Vibrations.

How many of them had it been already.

Rosé continually exterminated the fake Yuukis that came up to her with the chainsaw, and had become covered in fresh blackish-red blood and flesh. Her sense of time had paralyzed. She couldn't even tell anymore whether she had been dancing here for ten minutes or an hour.

Her breathing was rough.

Her thoughts dulled by the stench of blood, the sacrilegious massacre, and the oscillations of the chainsaw.

'The Princess doesn't understand how we are living'

— What are you trying to say!

'Your Highness, are you saying you would allot tax funds for that work alone?'

— You just wanted to get out of the extra work didn't you!?

'You don't understand, Rosé!'

— At least listen to what I have to say!!

'It must've been tough. You've worked hard'

"Damn you fakes!!"

Rosé ended up venting her anger about all that had happened to her on the enemies.

The enemy came. She swung the self-moving blade. Vibrations.

“This is all!!”

Sound of entrails being churned.

The enemy came. She thrust the self-moving blade. Vibrations.

“Your fault that!!”

Sound of the enemy being severed.

The enemy jumped. She stabbed the self-moving blade. Vibrations.

“I can’t even die together with Yuuki-san!! Die — all of you! Just *fucking die already!!*”

Whether her ‘all of you’ meant the enemies or the society that surrounded her.

The princess in her macabre dance did not have the energy to tell them apart.

“Huff... huff...”

When finally the enemies were annihilated, her wild dance partner ceased its movements and returned to being a sword.

Rosé who had been dragged about fell down hard on the swamp of blood and flesh bits on the floor.

“This is the worst dance ever, never before and never again”

She steadied her breathing and looked over her surroundings.

It was horrible. The once neatly arranged pews were scattered about and the walls were painted with blood splatters. The holy vessels and the statues of saints were covered in blood and flesh, severed heads, arms and legs, torsos and entrails. Most of all, a sickening stench of death dominated the air.

Like a heretical ritual, muttered Rosé.

“...ahaha”

The princess who was supposed to be loved as the leader of the nation had, right at the feet of the heavens, made a mess of the cathedral who should rightly be the healing of the people, sitting atop a corpse with her whole body covered in blood. And she

laughed.

“AH HA HA HA HA. Look at this! *This is your beloved holy maiden, Princess Rosé!*”

She picked up her blood drenched clothes by the hem and smiled maliciously.

“I suppose I should wear a red dress the next time I sit on the throne”

Then she sighed... *what am I doing.*

She tried giving it her all but it only came to ruin.

Even when she lost her senses and decided to die she ended up being laughed at by her rival.

Was realizing my powerlessness and being stained in blood like this the culmination of my life?

Or did I live to for Glenn to manipulate as the demon queen and be abhorred for all eternity?

“Yuuki-san. What am I supposed to do?”

She daubed her fingertip in blood and wrote on the floor.

[Yu-u-ki]

They were cryptic letters, unknown to Rosé.

But she would never forget the letters he taught her.

“I wanted to try my best before seeing you, but I’m already hopeless. Can I even go see you now?... will you hate a blood coated girl like this?”

She turned and talked to the letters, the words not reaching him.

And she wasn’t confident that she could hide her defilement like Arina.

— Surely he would start avoiding Rosé now...

“But I want to see you. I want to hear your voice. Otherwise, I...”

PIRIRIRIRI

“...?”

A strange sound rang.

It sounded like a chime, like a musical instrument. A sound she had never heard before.

Something vibrated. It was the E:ID phone she received from Arina.

Did it break, no, that witch probably did something again.

PIRIRIRIRI

It was gratingly high pitched... will it please stop.

Trying to somehow stop it, Rosé touched the item.

PI!

[Ah, it connected! How long are you planning to go look for Mist!!]

“——... eh”

It was Yuuki's voice.

There was Yuuki's voice coming from the magic item.

[I told you to go back if you couldn't find her!]

It's Yuuki's voice—!!

[You're not lost are you? I'll take over already, you come back and watch the house, Arina!]

So this device talks to Yuuki?

Not a fake. She knew. This voice can't be fake.

[Oi. Helloooo?]

“Yuuki-san...”

[...eh? Princess Rosé?]

“Yuuki-san... Yuuki-san!! Yuuki-san Yuuki-san Yuuki-san!!”

Unable to understand, Rosé frenetically called out Yuuki’s name. Misereable, sobbing and crying like a child, but it showed how desperate she was for him.

[Whoa, um, what’s wrong?]

“I, I did everything I could! I’m the princess after all! I promised Yuuki-san too! But, in the end, I cant...!”

[—...]

“Nobody will listen to me! The consul acted like it’s not his problem, father scolded me, Maar, she said it was my fault! My fault that her mother died!!”

Rosé rambled and rambled at Yuuki.

She couldn’t stop it coming out anymore.

“I, what am I doing this for, who am I doing this for...! Yuuki-san... Yuuki-san... I”

[Princess Rosé]

Yuuki listened in silence, but after a while, he suddenly interrupted her.

[You worked hard. Good girl]

He said to her with a gentle, understanding voice.

The same gentle voice like the fake used.

[Princess Rosé. If you ever felt like running away, tell me any time. I’ll be on your side — if need be, come to my world]

“Yes, I, with you...”

[But]

[Are you sure you’ll be alright with that?]

“...”

The fake Yuuki tempted her with sweet words.

Giving her peace, no matter what shape it took.

But the real Yuuki didn't.

He asked a question she was hard pressed to answer.

[If you turn your back now, I'm sure you're going to regret it. I did, and have regretted it ever since]

As Rosé began to be at a loss for words, Yuuki started to tell his story.

[A long time ago, I, almost left Arina to die]

"Arina...?"

How could that invincible woman be pushed to the point of death?

[Because of how she was, when we were kids, she was bullied at school. When I transfe... moved to live nearby, when I met her, she had completely become the perfect image of a 'bullied child'. It got on my nerves, you know, and when I realized it I was already covering for her. It was a brat's childish sense of justice]

[But honestly, it was tiring. See, because I protected her, I also got the cold shoulder at school. It was suffocating... or rather, I honestly thought Arina was in the way]

[So what I did, I took my distance from her, a little bit at a time. That was what I did wrong]

[Arina was drenched in pharmaceuticals and left for several days. When I found her she was already on her dying breaths]

"...eh"

[It was one bad luck on another. Arina's mom was away for work, the school was on summer vacation. Her classmates wanted to prank her a little and shut her inside a storehouse, but the adults who don't know anything padlocked the storehouse. Covered in drugs in the hot room without anything to eat or drink, suffering. She spent about three days in that state. Now that I think back to it, she probably survived

because she had the hero's power. Normally, she should've died a long time before that]

[I noticed something was wrong and asked her classmates, then climbed into the storehouse. When I found her, she saw me, and said this:

— 'I believed you'll come for me']

So Yuuki and Arina had that kind of trauma in their childhood.

It was an unexpected history, but Rosé said.

“There's no reason Yuuki-san should feel responsible”

[No. Arina's mom clearly said to me, 'I'm counting on you'. I shirked it, so it was my responsibility]

“But even if that's true. Didn't you end up saving Arina?”

[No, I didn't. I didn't make it in time. The pharmaceuticals they drenched Arina with, solvents they said, they were a strong hallucinogenic. It turned Arina loopy. She would suddenly clutch her belly and laugh out loud while in class, she started praying to me like a god, and she made up an imaginary friend she called 'Kaoru'. Her weirdness was sorted out one way or another after a month, but the brain damage was so severe nobody was sure when she would relapse]

— She's totally *not* sorted out.

That might be the moment the phenomenon that would rock the world was born.

There's still some question about Arina's hero heritage, but she experienced something that horrid while having the power equal to one, eating into her body and mind. Was that where her divinely strong power and devilishly tenacious heart received its power from?

Having turned crazy, she made up an outer shell of a childhood friend Yuuki wanted, and hid inside of it. Therefore, all Yuuki knew was the 'normal' her.

Cheesy as it sounds, the only thing left that held her back was 'love'.
If it weren't for her beloved Yuuki, the world would've perished long ago.

[I turned my back on Arina. I went halfhearted on something I started and ran away from it. I've regretted it ever since. That's why I can't betray Arina]

[Princess Rosé. I've only known you for a little while, but I know how hard you must be working. So I'm sure that you'll regret it if you ran away now]

Telling the story of his past, Yuuki gently chided Rosé.

...but Rosé's feelings were somewhere else.

This is frustrating.

Arina and Yuuki were linked by a chain of madness.
It joined them together tightly, and could not be easily rent apart.
Rosé did not have that, she bit her lip.
Even though Rosé was willing to die if he wanted it.
Even though she always thought of him even when drowning in blood.
But he didn't know any of that, and only loved the maddened Arina.
Loving her because she had gone mad, because she had been driven to madness.

— Like hell I would ignore something so frustrating...!

"But Yuuki-san"

Rosé picked up a piece of dead flesh by her feet and asked

"If things keep going on like this, I'm going to go crazy too you know. It's painful and heartbreaking you know... why, things get so bad for me I can't even tell you about it,

you know?”

She then smiled and said this.

Almost as a joke, she easily, lightly said.

“If I do, will you take responsibility for me, too?”

[Yeah, alright. I’m used to weird girls]

clink

A lynchpin clicked into place within Rosé, the sound of two points being tightly bound together.

Her heart leapt in joy.

Ah, now he will never betray me.

Even if she saw Rosé stained in blood, he will surely say,

[Let me take care of this]

Rosé understood the bewitching power of that line.

That’s just the kind of person he was.

Therefore, I will also live for his sake

I will live so that he will love me

[I’m wondering, aren’t you being too serious, Princess Rosé? Remember when we were walking in town today, you said, ‘I’ll put you in jail’? That made me surprised, even for a joke... can’t you be more like that?]

“Huhu♪ Alright, I can do that. Thank you very much. I’ll try doing my best. — by the way, Yuuki-san”

“Do you like red dresses?”



Red flames were rising. A conflagration.
A scorching hot wind wrapped Rosé and Arina.

“...Are you sure you’re okay with this?”

Arina asked Rosé.

After Rosé had finished talking with Yuuki, she came back right away.
She seemed to be having quite a difficulty this time, her face looked a little worn out.

“I really don’t care about it at all, but there’s something wrong with a Princess burning down a facility of the state religion”

After considering what to do with that mountain of corpses, Rosé proposed this to Arina.

[Let’s burn this down, all of it]

““Something wrong’...?”

“Yes”

“That’s good then. It’s really touching to hear that from you”

“Is that sarcasm? The guards are going to come soon, what are you going to do?”

“Well, whatever. Let’s just say that a heretic trying to pull a martyr act started it, and I just happened to witness it. It’s a bit high-handed, but it’ll be alright, I’m the princess after all. People have great faith in me”

“Then there’s really no need to burn it down, is there?”

Rosé then turned her eyes on the rising flames.

“I’m drawing a line here. I’m thinking of converting to a new god”

“...ah, I see”

Arina had a guess about it.

She saw through Rosé's intention right away and nodded.

"He's a wonderful god, right"

"You can say that again"

Watching the flames rise, Arina and Rosé — the girls who were fated to become the Hero and the Demon Queen smiled the same smile.

Chapter 62

The Princess in a Red Dress

The next day, in an office in Castle Ivan.

The girl poured some tea from a pot and gracefully tasted it.

Her dress, a vivid red dress that burned the eyes, fluttered under the sunlight.

Seeing Rosé, who normally wore a white dress of purity, the consul that had received her summons froze still in amazement.

“Is something the matter? Please, feel free to have a seat”

Showing a composed smile, completely unlike the day before, the princess put the teacup to her mouth.

“Well, right...”

As the consul seated himself, he said,

“It’s a surprise to see you in ‘red’ your highness. — perchance, did anything happen?”

“You see, there were lots of things going on as of late, be it in the Isky residence or the cathedral yesterday. I thought I needed to do something to change my luck”

Rosé opened her arms wide, showing off her dress.

“What do you think? Does it suit me?”

“Well,... I personally think that these things are good in moderation, but as for the thought of the people, I think they will give it room of consideration”

In this country, there’s a strong meaning that goes beyond tradition or custom for an unmarried princess to wear white.

It was one way of showing her charisma to the people by being upright and clean.

That kind of political reasoning existed.

“I don’t think the senate will look kindly to it”

“Is that so? Even though I’ve taken a liking to it,” said the princess as she once again sipped from her cup.

“I hope that everyone will find it agreeable soon,” she said with a meaningful smile.

“Right,” replied the consul reluctantly, accepting the princess’ whimsy.

“So, what need do you have of me?” he cut to the topic.

“Very well. I apologize for calling on you again, but this is about yesterday’s matter regarding the fake seal. I wanted to know what sort of measures are being put under way”

The consul showed obvious displeasure.

This again, he thought.

It showed on his face.

“We are investigating who the mastermind behind the seal’s falsification is”

“How long will it take until you come to a conclusion?”

“We are, after all, grasping at clouds, here. Maybe in a half or one year”

“Now, that would be troubling. My name, Rosé, will be dragged through the dirt for a year, I can’t have that, can I”

“Even if you say so”

“It might be necessary to reissue the seal, after all”

“ ...”

The consul let out a small sigh.

“Ara, I don’t think you need to worry. I have a way to raise the funds needed for that, you see”

“Oh? I don’t think that much money to spare exists in the country, though...”

“There is”

The princess chuckled.

“It will come from your estate”

“ ...”

.....

....., huh?"

"If we auctioned your house and your manor, we can at least gather that much money, right?"

Rosé was giddy with happiness, making her hands into fists on her chest.

"I worked hard and calculated it, you know♪" she said with an affected cute pose.

The consul looked at her like she was out of her mind.

"Um, uh,... what are we talking about again?"

"Eh? But we're talking about money, right? It'll be all right, you won't be left out in the cold. You do have an official residence, do you not? It's not as spacious as your current one, but it does at least have security put into consideration"

"O... kay?"

The princess had planned things on her own like a child ignorant of the world.

Dumbfounded by the surrealness of the situation, the consul said,

"...let's say that it does for a moment, but even so, even as the princess you can't take our property without reason, you know"

Actually, as a country under the Rule of Man ¹, it was not impossible for the Ivan Royal family if they used overbearing means. But even so, if they did so without reason the other consuls and nobles will protest, and at worst lead to the overthrow of the Royal Family by a revolution.

That was what the consul was saying.

"I know that, that's why I'm 'requesting' it of you. Please give your house to me, Rosé Vosne-Romaneé Gran Cru Ivan," said the princess like it had nothing to do with her.

The consul looked like he came down with vertigo.

"If I may be so forward, I think you need to learn more about the ways of society, your highness"

"Eh,... you won't give me?"

“Do I have to spell it out for you?”

“Oh my. I thought I came up with a good idea”

With an irritated sigh, the consul stood up and said,

“If our business is done, then please allow me to take my leave”

“A-ah, that’s unfortunate. I worked so hard and thought about it. — by the way, Lord Consul”

“Might you have any knowing of the ‘bugs’?”

Rosé suddenly brought the topic out.

“The cursed things the traitor Glenn used, right? What about them?”

“I saw them right next to me you know, I was very afraid. You see...”

Rosé produced a dropper for adding spices into her tea.

“They were minuscule monsters you can hide in a tool like this”

She put a drop of its contents inside the pot.

“If you mix them into a drink like this, and give it to someone to drink...”

She poured it into a cup.

“The drinker will be thrallled by the creator you know”

She then sipped the fragrant tea.

“If she said ‘die’ they will really die. If she said ‘become a dog’, they’ll become a dog, if she said ‘kill’ they will kill. They could control someone to do what they’re told”

The consul scrunched his eyebrows a little.

Even as just an illustration, seeing Rosé cast the curse and sipping the tea herself made him uncomfortable. Also, why did she bring this up now?

“Glenn is such a horrible man to do such a thing. Seriously, I was scared”

“Weren’t they all eradicated in the Isky house?”

“I would like to believe so, but we can’t have proof of that. We don’t know when someone would try and use something like that again... hmm, Lord Consul, you have

a daughter, don't you?"

"Yes. She is studying at a girls' school in Cotail territory"

"My my"

"I pray that the young lady doesn't fall victim to the 'bugs'"

"—..."

Somehow, the expression just now contained *implications*.

The consul became more and more uneasy.

He felt an aura that he can't be careless against from the smiling princess in front of him.

Why did she suddenly start talking about the 'bugs'?

Why did she suddenly start talking about his daughter?

And also — why was she smiling?

knock knock

There was a knock on the door.

"Ara... I seem to have a guest. Let's see her in"

[Excuse me]

...a familiar voice.

The door opened and there was a young girl standing there.

"It is an honor to accept your invitation for a tea party today, Princess Rosé"

The girl did a courteous bow trained into her in the school for young ladies.

She then raised her eyes.

"Ara... Father!"

Apero, the consul's dearest one and only daughter.

She seemed surprised to encounter her father 'by chance'

"Father, please hear this! Princess Rosé invited me to a tea party!!" She happily reported.

"Y... yes, I see. It's a great honor"

Unable to comprehend the situation, the consul shivered as he replied tentatively.

How, why was his daughter who was supposed to be in a dormitory far away here?

She and the Princess are —... what is the princess trying to do to his daughter?

Princess Rosé was smiling, but she seemed like a monster.

The red dress she was wearing looked like fresh blood or hellfire in his eyes.

N, no no no

*I'm thinking too much... The 'Holy Maiden' Princess Rosé, of all people, wouldn't be capable of such scheming...

"By the way, Apero-san. Do you know what 'Wame Kame' is?"

Eek, the consul made a stiff shriek.

"Wame, Kame...?"

The daughter tilted her head.

"Ara ara, so you don't know. I happened to hear my manservant say that name out, I don't know what that is, either. I thought I could ask you about it if you knew..."

"My apologies for not being of use"

Like hell she'd know!! It's the name of an elite whorehouse!!

'I have a way to raise the funds needed for that, you see'

'They could control someone to do what they're told'

'I pray that the young lady doesn't fall victim to the 'bugs''

When the princess' words connected, his pulse quickened.

"Incidentally, could it be that I barged in on an important discussion..."

"Not at all, it's fine. — Our discussion is over after all"

The princess put another drop of spice from the dropper. As she did...

Her smile disappeared for a moment, turning as expressionless as a mask.

"I'm sure your father will conclude this matter within the month"

Otherwise your household belongings will be forfeit

This girl will be the hostage until then. Understood?

If you don't, I suppose I should make your girl pay for it?

Even without words, the threats reached him like a phantom.

It was a complete change from her airheadedness from just now.

The sharp glint in her eyes made him feel a boundless fear.

Who was this woman in front of his eyes?

Was she really the same princess who was ignorant of politics yesterday?

He had no way of knowing that, but one thing was clear.

She'll do it. This girl will do it.

The consul was convinced, he stood stock still as if he was glued to the floor.

Moreover, nobody could save the consul from this situation.

The princess who had sprung the fearful trap returned to her bright smile.

"Your father is an excellent consul. He spared no effort to help everyone of the people.
— come now, cheer for him"

"Yes! Father, Do your best to fulfill the princess' expectations!!" said the unknowing

daughter with a face full of smile.

Yes, the unknowing daughter, Aperó, drank the liquid poured from the teapot without a shred of suspicion.

“Y... yes’m...”

The consul broke out in cold sweat and did a queer smile.

“W, wwwwwell then... I... shall take my leave!!”

He ran off to perform his ‘duties’

“Father looked a little pale ...”

Aperó saw her father off with a worried look.

“I hear his work is much more laborious than what we women imagine,” said princess Rosé as she summoned a servant to begin the preparations for tea.

“Well. He doesn’t usually look like that... anyway, Princess Rosé. About that dress...”

Sure enough, she was curious about Rosé’s red dress.

Huhu, chuckled rose.

“I met an amazing man♪”

Princess Rosé said as she let through a look of someone in love that would be obvious to another girl her age.

“Um... would he be, your fiancé?”

“Not my fiancé, but, Rosé is still a girl after all. — I’m at least allowed to fall in love, don’t you think?”

As befits a girl her age, Aperó snapped up at the love story, Rosé spent several whole hours preaching about the wondrousness that is Yuuki, and the two girls talked excitedly.



✂ The previous night

The cathedral was aflame.

The fact soon spread throughout the town and caused sudden panic among the citizens.

Looking afar at the burning cathedral, a young girl sat on the roof of an urban house.

Chaser, who had successfully escaped from Arina.

“A-ah. It didn’t go well.

Yes. It was a small failure, I guess”

As usual, she talked to herself as she reflected on her strategic failure.

“I thought I could trick Arina with a fake Yuuki.

It might have been too soon after all. It’s a shame about Rosé, though.

I thought I could decipher the curse Arina placed on Rosé.

If I had that I might even be able to manipulate Arina.

Unfortunate. Yes, unfortunate”

“But still”

Chaser sent her gaze towards the town. There, among the crowd shocked by the fire, there was a pair of man and woman hugging each other, paying the situation no mind.

They were Yuuki and Mist.

Chaser grinned.

“I caught the smallest fish. I could lure out the bigger fish with her.

...This time, let’s not hurry, take it slow.

I know, me!"

The Dry County Yuuki whispered something to Mist.

Mist's face was dyed red. SHe nodded and stared up at the empty sky.

Yuuki finally dispersed and vanished, but Mist never noticed and continued to stare at the sky.

"I understand, Yuu-kun's true feelings. Wait for me, Yuu-kun... I'll take you to a home for just the two of us..."



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